


Strategic Topic
Substantive Items
Committee Reports

Items below this line are for receipt and/or approval, without discussion

Closing Items
SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING
BOARD MEETING

Monday 29 March 2021 at 6.00 pm
 Endeavour House - Meriden Drive, Kingshurst

AGENDA

Ref	Item	Purpose	Lead	Report Type	Report Classification
1	Chair's Welcome and Introduction (including thanks to retiring Board member)				
2	Appointment of new Board member				
3	Apologies for Absence				
4	Declarations of Interest				
5	Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 January 2021				
6	Action Log				
7	Chief Executive's Update	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
8	Feedback from Board Away Day - CONFIDENTIAL	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
9	Review of Learning following Redwood House incident - CONFIDENTIAL	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			

10	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
11	Development Programme Presentation	Andy Duke – Development Manager			
12	Financial Monitoring for Quarter 3 2020/21	Samantha Gilbert – Chief Financial Officer			
13	Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee meeting held on 22 February 2021	Chris Williams – Chair of Housing Operations Committee			
14	Chair's Report from Human Resources and Remuneration Committee meeting held on 15 March 2021	Jenny Fletcher – Chair of Human Resources and Remuneration Committee			
15	Chair's Report from Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 8 March 2021	Nigel Page – Chair of Audit and Risk Committee			
16	Forward Plan	Fiona Hughes – Chief Executive			
17	Any Other Business				
18	Review of Meeting				
19	Date of next Meeting: 7 June 2021				

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021 MINUTES

Present: Richard Hyde (Chair), David Bell, Ben Burton, Diane Howell, Jenny Fletcher, Nigel Page, Patricia Smith (Vice Chair), Louise Tubbs, and Chris Williams

In Attendance: April Halpin

Officers: Fiona Hughes; Surjit Balu; Kevin Bennett; Samantha Gilbert; Mary Morrissey; Mary Moroney; Mark Wills (until end of Item 7), Michael Brymer, Barbara Griffiths

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and extended a warm welcome to April Halpin who will join the Board from April 2021. A brief moment of silence was observed to mark the sad death of former Board member Blondell Maynard, in recognition of her contribution to SCH during her time as a Board member.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mark Pinnell.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Diane Howell had been omitted from those present at the last meeting, with that exception there were no matters arising from the previous minutes and they were approved as an accurate record.

DECISION

THE BOARD

(i) **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2020.

5. ACTION LOG

The Scrutiny panel event was discussed and reasons why this was being delayed until post Covid19. Fiona explained that the former Scrutiny members have specifically expressed a preference to attend an event rather than hold this virtually online.

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the action log.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE

The Chair acknowledged that the Board had submitted many questions prior to the meeting which had been answered.

Fiona introduced the report, starting off with an update on the response to Covid19, the Board are well versed in the framework that supports the work being done. There has been significant national restrictions in place which requires lots of commitment from the team to continue to deliver services. The current restrictions mean there is nothing specific that curb the activity of SCH as a housing provider, we are still able to work in people's homes and are committed to continuing with the allocations process. We have reviewed the services across the board as set out in 4.5 of the report, the only service we have decided to restrict is routine response repairs on the basis that we are conscious of the need to act responsibly and limit exposure of staff and customers. Sickness levels are high at the moment in part due to the requirement of people to self-isolate but we are keeping this decision under weekly review.

Any decision to pause any aspect of service delivery comes through the Executive team for sign off. Calls to those clinically vulnerable customers who are shielding have recommenced, albeit with a lighter touch; and we are working through those customers who we know would benefit from our support but who are not in the clinically vulnerable group.

An excellent development is the visiting pod at Saxon Court which has been really well received by residents, we were keen to offer a facility for isolated residents to have the opportunity to see people without having to go out or have visitors in their property. We have facilitated 40 visits to date.

Fiona updated the Board on how we are tracking performance via benchmarking against our peers, particularly related to Covid19 and the effect that is having on service delivery. Fiona recognised that there may be some inconsistency as the HouseMark focus differs from month to month and drew members' attention to the table in the report setting out our performance against key indicators. Sickness levels within SCH are slightly higher than the HouseMark report, rent loss for void properties is slightly below sector average and in terms of rent arrears, although we have seen an increase in arrears since March we are performing slightly better than across the sector. Gas safety continues to be ahead of the sector average with stringent efforts to gain access. In terms of response repairs we were performing well prior to pause of the service.

The Chief Executive report was paused at that point for questions relating to Covid19 response and performance.

Questions arising:

Q. Do we have the facility to carry out virtual viewings?

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

A. A lot of work has been done to improve the process including the opportunity for those that are matched to a property to be able to view the property via WhatsApp video call, FaceTime or other platforms for video conferencing, Surjit is happy to take the discussion offline.

Q. You mentioned that Saxon Court isn't classed as a care home, is it right that staff can access the vaccine?

A. Yes it is really positive news that the team at Saxon can access the vaccine as they are essential front line care workers.

Q. There are a lot of informal care arrangements in place with families providing care for residents at Saxon Court, how will you manage those?

A. We consider each case on an individual basis and if a family member is required to administer medication we will continue to work with them to enable this to happen.

Fiona updated members on the After Action Review meeting facilitated by the emergency services, which took place following the fire at Redwood House on 5 December. The meeting was generally very positive and allowed reflection on how the various teams worked together. There was lots of positive feedback particularly from the fire service who commended the accuracy of the information given about the block. Following a previous joint visit all landings were properly labelled and identifiable which was a great help to the fire service, along with the ease of accessing the block. There were two main learning points firstly, the need for an accessible paper copy of occupants in each property, and this has now been facilitated with the help of the duty manager and CCTV. The second issue is slightly more contentious in that it involves the personalising of the landings by residents, the fire service indicated that this is not helpful and as a result we have adopted a zero tolerance to any items left on landings and will continue to monitor.

The fire service and police have taken away their own learning from the exercise but generally felt the incident was well handled, the building behaved as expected in terms of compartmentation.

Q. Has the adoption of hard copy paperwork detailing residents in the block been extended to all other blocks?

A. Yes

Fiona briefly ran through the other sections of the report including the customer satisfaction and STAR benchmarking reminding members that a STAR survey has not been completed for 3 years and is the only way to accurately benchmark our satisfaction levels against our peers. The STAR survey is required to be undertaken by a third party and as a result we have instructed Acuity to undertake this task. Alongside that we will be carrying out quarterly transactional surveys which will measure customer perception of a number of service specific tasks.

Fiona confirmed that an action plan to improve rent arrears has been drafted and key elements can be found in 8.2 of the report and is happy for Surjit to

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

take questions or respond to comments offline (Surjit was experiencing technical issues with his connection during the meeting).

Q. Jenny felt that the measures did not go far enough for the Board to be confident that the Delivery Plan objectives would be met fully.

A. Fiona confirmed that Surjit is happy to have a conversation to discuss concerns off line to address concerns with Mobyssoft.

Q. Diane echoed the sentiments of Jenny but wanted to know how the Action Plan was addressing those cases where a smaller amount of rent arrears had accrued in an effort to reduce the cycle of debt.

A. Surjit explained that there are currently a package of measures including working with the Tenancy Sustainment team at commencement of tenancy. Problems with connection ceased the explanation where it was agreed again to take the discussion offline.

In summary, the Chair confirmed that Board are right to be concerned about the robustness of the Action Plan to deliver the required improvements and asked whether there is a role for Internal Audit to review the action plan to provide the Board with more assurance. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that this was an option.

Fiona briefly explained the position on SCH's blended working model in that staff will, in the main, work from home and will have access to the offices for collaborative project work, this would result in the need for less office space. All considerations are being looked at with input from IT, HR and Finance, and Fiona confirmed that the Board will be kept up to date on any developments as they unfold.

Fiona talked the Board through the progress and rationale for pressing forward with the Business Process mapping, recognising that the lack of auditable workflows means that customers have difficulty accessing services which leads to poor satisfaction levels. There is a requirement to understand our processes before we can put in workflows and so have commissioned Sopra Steria to carry out a review of our processes, they will commence this piece of work imminently.

The mental health & advice support officer has been appointed and SCH welcome Natalia, Natalia has already made an impact by setting up advice and guidance on our website for staff when dealing with customers presenting with complex mental health issues.

Fiona gave a brief overview and update on the New Build and acquisitions, Willow Way is now complete and Faulkner Road is due to complete next month. Wagon Lane and Halifax Road will be completed later in the year. SCH are delighted to be involved in the Kingshurst Village Centre and are currently looking more closely at the housing design alongside the Council's Architect. The scheme will include a health facility and we are currently looking to employ a community engagement officer. Furthermore, the development of Lakeside is progressing, the Board will recall that the site will be developed for use as move on accommodation for single young homeless people, alongside a small

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

number of houses. We have already completed on a small number of acquisitions which supports the supply of much needed housing.

In terms of Board and Governance, Fiona confirmed the appointment of April advising that there were a number of excellent candidates. The advert for the Independent Board member has been published.

Mary, Richard and Fiona have been working on gap analysis of the NHF's Code of Governance and will be meeting to discuss this in more detail in the coming weeks.

The Board away day will focus on performance and engagement in the context of the Government White Paper. Fiona acknowledged that many of the Board members had previously submitted questions and answers distributed before the meeting, but opened out the discussion for questions.

Q. In terms of blended working what are the options considered and how does that affect the need for office accommodation?

A. The option for blended working is currently the subject of a feasibility study which will include consideration of the possible need to reconfigure current office accommodation. Whilst a definitive answer cannot be provided at present about what the need for accommodation will be in the future the Board will be kept fully informed of progress.

Q. The project mapping exercise is supported by the Board but as it is quite a large project I wanted to understand if we have set aside a budget?

A. It is clear that potentially further costs will be incurred especially if we are potentially looking at a new system but we are still in the very early stages of understanding that and will require advice and guidance on systems available.

DECISION

(i) NOTED the content of the report.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 2020/21

Mark Wills introduced the report for noting, a pre-meeting had been held with Ben Burton and Mike Brymer prior to the meeting. Mark drew members' attention to Item 5 relating to working safely during Covid19. Individual risk assessments have been carried out for all staff and service areas and the Corporate Health and Safety team have been involved in drafting those. Unfortunately due to a cluster of cases reported in the contact centre, a statutory notification to the HSE was required. This resulted in a temporary closure of Endeavour House.

Item 6 of the report details the continuing work on Building Safety and Fire Safety to understand the legislation. Mark drew members' attention to points 6.2 and 6.4 of the report, it is clear that there will be a number of changes that will be required before the Bill becomes statute. There are lots of articles

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

around accountable persons, competency levels etc. There is an active building safety group within the Council who are tasked with overseeing new builds including a project lead to oversee changes brought about by the building safety regulations.

Section 10 sets out the importance of monitoring Health and Safety Audits and a full programme of audits across the business has been agreed with ELT, the full findings will be presented to ELT early in 2021.

Section 13 sets out incidents of note during the quarter with additional detail within the appendices. In summary Mark advised that there were 22 incidents reported with 9 submissions to HSE as a result of Covid19 absences, with 8 of those being within the contact centre. 13.2 also makes reference to the fire at Redwood House.

DECISION

- (i) **NOTED** the content of the report
- (ii) **NOTED** Appendix 1 – SCH Compliance report in relation to Home Standard Duty Compliance
- (iii) **NOTED** Appendix 2 – Accident/Incident reporting Analysis Q3 2020/21

Mark Willis left the meeting at 18:59

8. SCH DELIVERY PLAN 2021-22

Fiona introduced the report, which had been to Board previously and amendments requested had been made. Fiona advised the Board that for ease of reading the pack contained a clean version and a version with tracked changes. Nick Page's management team, the Strategic Housing Board and wider partners have had an opportunity to feed into the document. The key point to high-light is the change to WR15 which has returned to 3.5% following the discussions in November. There has also been an additional appendix which sets out benchmarking over recent years to enable comparisons to be made.

The Chair thanked the team for pulling together the document, acknowledging that this is not a simple or quick task and that the document was an excellent framework.

Questions/Comments arising:

C. Concerned about the 85 properties that are ready for let but not let, feels the target should be improved not moved down to meet under performance.

- A.** The figure relates to voids in total which are either in the void process or fit for letting, it does not include properties taken out for clearance activity or major works, apologies if that is not clear.

Q. Very useful to obtain track changes version but concerned about Strategic Option 1 on page 82 and the uninspiring wording used.

A. Kevin is happy to take feedback about how best to resolve this outside of the meeting.

Q. Page 83 unhappy with the mixing up of Spandrel panels and Sprinkler works seems to be a general process needs to be separated out and with some specific targets for the year.

A. This is intended to clarify what the programme will look like.

Q. KPI WR3 the target appears to be below what we have recently achieved in terms of securing additional income.

A. The target has been revised based on the last two years but we will increase the target to match current performance.

Q. Eviction panel reposition can you clarify the meaning of this does it mean we will be looking to evict more people?

A. Happy to pick this up outside of the meeting given the connection issues Surjit is having but the intention is to reduce evictions.

DECISION

(i) APPROVED the final draft Delivery Plan for 2021-22

9. BUILDING SAFETY CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

Mike introduced the report which provides an overview of two projects which fit in with the focus on building safety and capital improvement, particularly around fire safety projects.

The sprinkler project is currently in the pre-construction or mobilising phase and we have appointed a project management team which includes a fire specialist from Savills, which is in line with the legislation and compliance. We have also appointed the contractor and project design team who are currently planning to carry out trial works. The trial works are the learning phase and will be carried out in a void property, residents can see what to expect when the work moves into their properties. Safety surveys are well under way including fire risk assessments and we are taking this opportunity to carry out asbestos surveys and update our asbestos information.

Q. When will the actual works commence and have you got an estimate for how long the project will take to complete?

A. The official start time is April 2021 and it is likely to take two and a half to three years to complete all the works, but we are aware of the desire to

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

accelerate the works wherever we can without compromising on quality and safety.

Q. A question relevant to both projects but there is a flavour to push forward with the works despite Covid19, what safeguards are in place with Contractors to ensure we are Covid safe?

A. We have received Risk Assessments and method statements from the contractor which have been signed off with safe systems of work. Staff on site will check that what is said to be happening on paper is happening in reality.

In terms of the Spandrel Panels we are in the pre-mobilisation stage, architects and principal designers have been appointed and a decision to use Rockpanel has been approved in terms of materials by Council's Building Control and fire service. Once we have received planning and building control approval we will move to procurement stage.

Q. Can you confirm whether the Council's Full Cabinet did approve the use of Rockpanel?

A. Yes they did approve the use of Rockpanel, it is just the order of information in the report that caused confusion.

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the content of the report

10. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET 2021/22

Sam Gilbert introduced the report, explaining that since the budget was last approved in November there were two major changes that have impacted on the budget. The first was September CPI being amended which had the effect of reducing the forecasted rent levels from 2.88% to 1.5% increase which is a reduction in real terms of £684k. The proposal is to reduce contribution to further capital expenditure.

The second change is the freeze on public sector pay for next financial year, members will remember that we had budgeted for a 1.5% pay increase and were planning to use the budget strategy reserve, we will no longer have to do this.

No questions.

DECISION

(i) **NOTED** the amendments to 2021/22 proposed HRA Budget

(ii) **NOTED** the impact of the 2021/22 pay freeze

(iii) **APPROVED** the use of £160,000 pay saving in 2021/22 and £4,000 in 2022/23 to reduce the use of the Budget Strategy Reserve which was approved by the Board on 30 November 2020

11. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORT

Kevin introduced the exception report confirming that we currently have a number of red KPI indicators and drew the Board's attention to 3.3 of the report setting out those indicators. Item 3.4 and 3.5 set out the detail around customer satisfaction and complaints handling, there is a specific focus on complaints due to regulatory and sector changes and there is a real shift to try and improve complaint handling, we hope to have that back on track by 31 January. In terms of customer satisfaction Kevin confirmed that there had been a number of service teams for whom satisfaction levels have dropped. We are refocusing our efforts in these areas with a number of digital improvements alongside the investment in people.

Item 4 sets out our cost per property (CPP) benchmarking information which has been estimated by our Finance team using similar HouseMark methodology to track costs across the year, as opposed to just at year end when HouseMark information is available. The information is contained within Appendix B and 4.2 of the report. CPP for estate services has increased and this is in the main linked to CCTV, cleaning and tree maintenance contracts.

Kevin confirmed that we have an increasing focus on improving performance and are working closely with Mary Morrissey's team within SMBC acting as a critical friend and providing support.

Q. I accept it is a challenging time for the Organisation, it isn't good to see red KPI's but appreciate the efforts to improve. Unsure why we are struggling with the re-let target and why this is still off target?

A. We have made a number of improvements and it is a real focus for us, although there is still a backlog left over from when we had to close the allocations function. It is worth noting that more than half of our current voids have been let within 18 days so we have seen some improvements and we are working on building on that. The indicator is an accumulative one i.e. year to date so the impact of closing the allocations function will always impact the KPI, however if you take month on month we are nearly at top quartile performance in this area.

Q. Is the poorer performance historical or Covid related we need to understand if this is an impact of Covid or whether we have always struggled with those particular indicators?

A. Customer satisfaction is one that we have historically been poorer in performance and some of the prerequisites to improving that performance have been impacted by Covid. Improvements have not happened as quickly as we would have liked but we are making improvements in terms of digital changes, people strategy. You will recall we agreed to set stretch targets and really push ourselves with KPI's and some of the issues of sickness associated with Covid have caused difficulties.

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING BOARD MEETING – 25 JANUARY 2021

C. Chris Williams commented that HO5 was a challenging target that was well researched and debated. The target was set by considering nearest Council's performance which did not just take nearest in terms of demographics into account but other considerations. It was a long journey to accept that target as a Board and the measures are paying off with October going green in terms of performance. I was pleased to see temporary accommodation secured through Spring Housing.

DECISION

(i) NOTED the overall performance outturn and the commentary listed in Appendix A, on those KPIs and where targets have not been met

12. CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2020

Nigel presented the report asking the Board to ratify the proposed amendments to the procurement approvals process. Acknowledging that we have seen a significant improvement in the procurement process; in terms of price v quality ratio it is recommended that this no longer has to come to the Audit and Risk Committee and can be agreed by ELT. The rationale for this is that it has never been the case that the Committee have not approved the recommendations from the staff and it feels as if it is just a rubber stamp that can delay the overall process.

Similar rationale for agreeing a deviation of 10% or more between bid expectations and bids received moving to ELT and approving contract awards with a value of between £500k and £2.5m.

The Committee had also approved the award of contract for clearance and cleaning of void properties and approval of the award for asbestos removal and disposal services.

Questions/Comments arising:

C. Happy to ratify the recommendations but would like the Committee to still have oversight of the decisions made in particular for larger contracts.

DECISION

(i) RATIFIED the proposed amendments to procurement approvals process as set out in the report

(ii) NOTED the approval of the award of contract for clearance and cleaning of void properties

(iii) NOTED the approval of the award of contract for asbestos removal and disposal services

(iv) NOTED

the actions taken by the Committee

13. ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORTS

Item 13 was noted below the line so not discussed but one question was asked in terms of whether or not safeguarding is mandatory training and if it was monitored. It was confirmed that it is both mandatory and monitored.

DECISION

(i) NOTED

the 2019/20 Annual Safeguarding Reports

14. FORWARD PLAN

One issue raised with the forward plan is that the Quarter 4 performance will not come to the Board in March but will be presented in June.

DECISION

(i) NOTED

the forward plan

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of the Board wanted to formally note the sad death of Mark Pinnell's father and would like to take the opportunity to extend their condolences formally.

19. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

All Board members confirmed that they were happy with the meeting and felt that there had been productive discussions, with the right balance of discussion and challenge. They felt that things were progressing more smoothly and acknowledge this was as a result of excellent papers sent out in good time, with the opportunity to ask questions prior to the meeting and have those answered fully. They were particularly pleased with the presentation of track changes in documents that had previously been to the Board. Officers also felt that there was a good level of discussion and challenge.

The meeting ended at 8:00 pm

Signed by chair:

Date:

This page is intentionally left blank

Solihull Community Housing Board Action Log

Green = completed and will be removed from next log and a record is kept by the Governance Team

Amber = in progress due to be completed by due date

Red = not completed or unlikely to be completed by due date

Items not yet due or put on hold due to Covid do not have a colour code

1. Actions outstanding / pending / in progress

Ref	Action	Responsible Person	Due Date	Comments	Status
0920-1	Board asked for some recognition of the contribution of members of the former Scrutiny Panel who will no longer be part of the SCHape Tenants Panel	Kevin Bennett	TBA	To be considered post Covid and proposals reported back to Board	
01-21	Board members raised a number of queries relating to the Rent Arrears Action Plan; Use of Mobysoft software and tackling low level debt at an early stage	Surjit Balu	0321	Executive Director has addressed concerns with the relevant Board members who raised concerns	

This page is intentionally left blank

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

BOARD MEETING: MONDAY 29 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Chief Executive's Update

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report sets out key areas of progress delivered through the Chief Executive since the last Board meeting and provides an update to the Board.

2. Recommendation – Item for Noting

- 2.1 The Board is recommended to:

(i) **NOTE** the content of the report.

3. Covid-19 Response and Recovery

- 3.1 Following the improving position with regard to Covid infections and the release of the roadmap by government setting out the plan for the gradual easing of restrictions, SCH has also produced a roadmap providing key headlines for SCH mapped against the national roadmap. The SCH roadmap is attached at appendix A.

4. Covid-19 – Performance Indicators

- 4.1 The table below provides the most recent update on the SCH Covid metrics and sector benchmarking. There may be some inconsistency in the measures reported previously as the focus of HouseMark key performance indicators varies from report to report.

	HouseMark	SCH Position	Trends, Actions & Forecasts
Staffing (workforce Sickness)	5.00%	4.59%	<p>Trend: Since May absence levels have been stable at just over 4% although latest figures slightly lower than HouseMark median</p> <p>Actions: SCH continue to capture Covid related absence and have increased support and recognition for staff to support wellbeing.</p> <p>Forecast: SCH are forecasting potential increases in absence aligned with normal winter trends and are actively reviewing workforce requirements.</p>

Lettings Activity	<p>Void rent loss 1.62%</p> <p>Properties void and available to let 0.99%</p>	<p>Void rent loss 1.30%</p> <p>Properties void and available to let 1.15%</p>	<p>Trend: Rent loss due to voids increased by 0.21% since March putting SCH in a favourable position compared to the sector where rent loss has increased by 0.62%. The number of properties void and available to let though is slightly higher than sector average.</p> <p>Actions: SCH reinstated lettings on 8 June and are working to reduce the backlog of fit for let (FFL) properties. In response to Covid, we have adopted new ways of working, which includes a new approach to viewings and signups and are reducing the overall amount of FFL properties on a monthly basis. We continue to review working practices to increase the number of properties let, in addition to the total number of resources within the team.</p> <p>Forecast: The sector forecast is that median year end loss will be 1.62%.</p>
Arrears	3.86%	3.87%	<p>Trend: SCH has seen an increase in arrears of 0.23% since March compared with an increase of 0.81% across the sector.</p> <p>Action: SCH is currently undertaking a review of our approach to income recovery and has identified a number of key areas of focus which will enable us to maximise our overall collection rates. We have invested within our Money Advice Team which now provides a much stronger offering in addition to stronger links with SMBC's Income and Awards Team. We are using more detailed insight to target our resources which includes a more early intervention and prevention approach.</p> <p>Forecast: The median position forecast is a further increase of 0.29% before end of year.</p>

Gas Safety	99.98%	99.83%	<p>Trend: SCH have maintained the 'sector norm' Gas Safety position (dropped slightly below at end of February) throughout the Covid period, with the benchmark data showing an improvement across the sector.</p> <p>Actions: SCH are reviewing the remaining annual profile of this workstream but it is known that there are a number of 'isolating residents' in the profile of gas inspection addresses in coming weeks which may have an impact on the compliance position.</p> <p>Forecast: SCH will maintain strong compliance performance, but are required to carefully manage resources whilst respecting residents' views to isolate during this challenging time.</p>
Repairs	212 non urgent repairs per 1000 properties	128 non urgent repairs per 1000 properties	<p>Trend: Non urgent repairs have increased across the sector, SCH number of non-emergency repairs dropped during January with suspension of non-urgent work.</p> <p>Actions: Repair levels are being monitored and additional resources are being used as appropriate to maintain service levels.</p> <p>Forecast: Currently there is no backlog of repairs and KPI performance is demonstrating satisfactory performance levels.</p>

5. SCH Board Away Day

- 5.1 The away day held on 25 February 2021, provided Board with an overview of the national policy direction heralded in the social housing white paper and the proposed regulatory framework which will be introduced. In the proposed framework, the Social Housing Regulator will begin pro-active regulation of consumer standards relating to the delivery of social housing through all social housing landlords including councils where stock is either managed directly or through an ALMO. This marks a departure from current practice and it is important that SCH begin to prepare and that Board are able to provide governance and oversight. The Social Housing Regulator has provided early guidance in the white paper on what compliance will look like and has given strong direction that social housing organisations should begin now to make preparations.

- 5.2 In addition to the above, the away day considered the ambition of SCH to be a high performing organisation, and how can we reach a consensus on what this means and how can we measure ourselves in terms of reaching this ambition?
- 5.3 In light of both of these drivers, the executive team suggested SCH adopt a high level self-assessment dashboard. The away day reflected on this and there is a report on the agenda to play back to Board the high level conclusions reached. It is proposed that a prototype dashboard come to the 7 June 2021 Board meeting for further discussion.

6. Client Role

- 6.1 SMBC are undertaking a review of their clienting of the ALMO and as part of this are both increasing the client function resource as well as restructuring the clienting team. The review is ongoing but as part of the early recommendations a monthly housing performance review group has been established to consider performance issues which require focussed work. The review group is led by Gemma Thompson for SMBC and Kevin Bennett for SCH.
- 6.2 Whilst the driver for this has been internal to SMBC, it also aligns with work being done nationally through the National Federation of ALMO's (NFA) to work with ALMO's and their client councils to make recommendations to develop smarter clienting both to improve outcomes but also prepare for the white paper. Solihull are involved with the above project with representation from both SCH and SMBC.

7. People Strategy

- 7.1 Board are aware that SCH has developed our People Strategy and that our staff have been involved in this through our staff engagement activities. There are 7 strands to the People Strategy and the infographic at appendix B sets this out. Each strand has a number of key projects which will be delivered over the coming year and beyond and are of course reflected in our Delivery Plan. The People Strategy articulates cohesively our ambition for SCH to be a great place to work and I am pleased to be able to communicate this to staff more widely over the coming weeks.
- 7.2 The development of the People Strategy and further detail has of course been shared with our Human Resources and Remuneration Committee.

8. Blended Working

- 8.1 As previously reported to Board, a working group has been established to review options for adopting a blended working approach to build on learning from Covid in relation to flexible and remote working. This will have a

financial implication for the organisation which is highlighted in the financial report.

- 8.2 The blended working approach is an acceleration of the vision for SCH to fundamentally review how the workforce operates across field, office and remote locations. The work carried out so far has been split in two parts:
1. A summary report presented to the Executive Leadership Team highlighting the benefits of 'blended working' linked to our new People Strategy. This covered the correlation (highlighting key research) between a more dynamic approach to workforce management, including wellbeing, work life balance, business productivity and employee engagement.
 2. A second report has been completed and presented to the Executive Leadership Team (9 March) which articulated a collective view from key business functions across SCH providing clarity of the requirements from core operational areas, IT, HR, Facilities and Finance.
- 8.3 The work undertaken so far has been highly collaborative across the business, including the close working of multiple departments, a successful staff consultation (over 60% response and 300 comments) and finally planned union engagement in the coming weeks.

9. Business Process Mapping and Workflow

- 9.1 As reported to Board at the last meeting, we have launched a project to process map our transactional business flow through the organisation with a view to both improving the business process and also automating it through a workflow system. This will be a significant business improvement but will bring a financial pressure as we invest in the purchase of a workflow system.
- 9.2 The project, which is working with Sopra Steria and CX Partners (business process, technology & customer/user experience expert organisations) has reached a mid-point, following a successful start. Some of the key activities have been around stakeholder interviews (over 40 conducted so far), core business processes and customer journey mapping, in-depth technology architecture discovery and user experience investigation.
- 9.3 In the coming weeks, the focus of the project will change to drawing clear conclusions around the operating model discovery stage and through a 'business case' style document, recommend strategically, a clear roadmap for a workflow technology solution that would be 'best fit' for SCH, considering financial forecasts and expected ROI for the Executive Leadership Team to consider.

- 9.4 The intended phase two of this project, is to procure a solution for the organisation. This will be a significant step for SCH not only to have a solid technology foundation but will significantly influence customer success, productivity, robust processes and internal user experience.

10. Asset Management Strategy

- 10.1 As Board are aware, we will be working with SMBC to produce a joint long term Asset Management Strategy to run from 2022 when our current interim two year strategy ends. To support the development of this strategy, we will be running a series of asset review workshops to consider options for our low performing stock and this may open up development opportunities for consideration.

11. Housing Development

- 11.1 SCH has always been committed to increasing the supply of affordable housing and in particular the delivery of increased social rented housing through building council housing. It is very rewarding to see our delivery on this improve as our pipeline of new developments increases. We have a presentation later on the agenda to highlight our success in this area.
- 11.2 Through the Asset Management Strategy, we will also be exploring potential development opportunities which may arise as we undertake options appraisals on our low performing stock.

12. Building Safety Capital Projects

- 12.1 The pre-mobilisation phase of the Sprinkler Project continues to progress. The vast majority of safety surveys (asbestos and fire risk assessments) have now been completed and all remaining are scheduled to be completed by 31 March 2021.
- 12.2 The installation of sprinkler systems to individual flats within each of the high rise blocks is progressing well, and the installation works are on target for all 37 pilot flats to be completed by the financial year end. Feedback from residents that have had the works completed has been positive.
- 12.3 Good progress is being made on the Spandrel panel replacement project. Consulting Structural Engineers have been appointed and have been onsite along with the project Architects and Dodd Group to establish and coordinate the pre-construction investigation works.
- 12.4 This is a necessary step to establish the structure composite of panel fixing points on each high-rise, and to enable the structural calculations both of which inform the final design and building Regulations applications.

- 12.5 To date, we have received planning permission; subject to further material conditions submissions on 3 of the 10 blocks included in the first phase of the Spandrel Replacement Project.

13. Redwood House

The After Action Review is on the agenda at item 9.

14. Anti-Social Behaviour

- 14.1 Following a deep dive into our ASB service, we are working with SMBC to review the delivery model for a cross tenure ASB service. A joint workshop has been arranged to map out what a good ASB service and tenure neutral offer looks like and, to calculate costs, resources and areas of responsibility. This will build on the technical knowledge and experiences of SCH and SMBC teams, with clarity over statutory and non-statutory responsibilities. Key consideration will be given to property and place based ASB and the links to the community trigger process in designing a new service model. The workshop will be supported by SMBC's Change Management team and will involve key service area leads.

15. Rent Arrears Action Plan

- 15.1 Following further work on the above, I can update on the following actions and trajectory. The Income Team is well into the year-end rent campaign with focus on; increased contact with customers in arrears, maximising payments collected via telephone (1,184 payments taken to end of Q3 totalling £329k), continued focus on customers owing £2k plus and, re-issuing possession claims through the Courts where activity is beginning to gather pace. With such activities and continued focus, the team are confident of achieving or getting very near indeed, to the current arrears as a percentage of debit target of 3.5% at year end.

The business case for RentSense, the analytics tool via Mobyssoft is progressing well. An implementation plan having considered IT requirements, resourcing and procurement is being developed. Once agreed, the lead-in time for getting RentSense up and running is 12 weeks.

16. Board and Governance

- 16.1 We are pleased to report that SMBC formally approved, last month, the rollover of our Management Agreement for a further five years.
- 16.2 Unfortunately, we were not successful in attracting any applicants for our independent Board member vacancy. It is now recommended that a recruitment agency be appointed to support a re-advertisement and search

process. A further meeting of the Board recruitment task and finish is being arranged to discuss this further.

- 16.3 The chair's first 3 year term will conclude in July this year. As Board are aware the appointment of the chair is an SMBC matter although will be done in discussion with the Board. This is currently being discussed with SMBC and the SCH chair of Human Resources and Remuneration Committee who will of course ensure that the Board are engaged in this process.
- 16.4 In view of our continuing and increasing role in housing development in partnership with SMBC, it is proposed to establish a housing development sub-committee. As well as oversight of existing development schemes, the remit of the sub-committee will include critically reviewing potential redevelopment opportunities arising through our work on stock viability as part of the asset management strategy as well as to consider the challenge of net zero as we go forward. It is proposed that the membership will include co-opted independent development expertise as well as SMBC representation.

REPORT AUTHOR: Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive
fionahughes@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
Tel: 0121 779 8812



Roadmap

Solihull Community Housing

Step 1

Solihull Community Housing actions

From 8 March – Nothing changes

- Continue to work from home
- Repairs to remain essential only
- Face to Face home visits only when essential
- Staff offices to remain closed except for permitted attendance
- Face coverings to be worn when not at desk in workplaces
- All meetings to continue virtually
- Saxon Court visits one named visitor per residents for indoor visits without close contact. Pre-visit LFD test required and PPE
- Public offices to remain closed
- Eviction ban remains
- Shielding guidance remains in place
- Community Halls and shared communal space remain closed

From 29 March – Minor changes

- Continue to work from home
- Chapelhouse Hub – maximum staffing numbers to be reviewed
- Endeavour House open Tuesday and Thursdays – Prior appointment local management arrangements in place to manage flow and numbers
- Recommence non-essential repairs to clear paused repairs
- Eviction ban lifted from 31 May, subject to review

Government actions

EDUCATION

8 MARCH

- Schools and colleges open for all students
- Practical Higher Education courses

SOCIAL CONTACT

8 MARCH

- Exercise and recreation outdoors with household or one other person
- Household only indoors

29 MARCH

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

8 MARCH

- Wraparound care, including sport, for all children

29 MARCH

- Organised outdoor sport (children and adults)
- Outdoor sport and leisure facilities
- All outdoor children's activities
- Outdoor parent & child group (max 15 people, excluding under 5s)

TRAVEL

8 MARCH

- Stay at home
- No holidays

29 MARCH

- Minimise travel
- No holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings and wakes (6)

Step 2

Solihull Community Housing actions

From 12 April – IRT Bi-Weekly

- Work from home if you can
- Endeavour House open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays – prior appointment basis local management arrangements in place to manage flow and numbers
- Face coverings to be worn when not at desk in workplaces and follow social distancing guidelines
- Opening of customer channels to report responsive repairs
- All meetings should continue to be virtually
- Saxon Court visits – two named visitors per residents with close contact. Pre-visit LFD required and PPE
- Public offices to remain closed
- Community Halls and shared communal space to remain closed

Government actions

At least 5 weeks after Step 1

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- All retail
- Personal care
- Libraries & community centres
- Most outdoor attractions
- Indoor leisure inc. gyms (individual use only)
- Self-contained accommodation
- All children's activities
- Outdoor hospitality
- Indoor parent & child groups (max 15 people, excluding under 5s)

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays (household only)
- No international holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings, wakes, receptions (15)
- Event pilots

Step 3

Solihull Community Housing actions

From 17 May – IRT Monthly

- Work from home if you can
- Endeavour House 4 day opening - local management arrangements in place to manage flow and numbers
- Chapelhouse Hub – Maximum numbers TBA
- Internal meetings up to 6 (observing social distancing at all times) can take place
- Face coverings to be worn when not at desk in workplaces and follow social distancing guidelines
- We will reintroduce viewings in line with indoor household meetings outlined by the Government.
- Community halls and shared communal spaces may open with Covid guidance in place but planned activities not starting yet

Government actions

At least 5 weeks after Step 2

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Maximum 30 people outdoors
- Rule of 6 or two households indoors (subject to review)

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Indoor hospitality
- Indoor entertainment and attractions
- Organised indoor sport (adult)
- Remaining accommodation
- Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances)

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel (subject to review)

EVENTS

- Most significant life events (30)
- Indoor events: 1,000 or 50% (plus pilots)
- Outdoor seated events: 10,000 or 25% (plus pilots)
- Outdoor other events: 4,000 or 50% (plus pilots)

Step 4

Solihull Community Housing actions

From 21 June – IRT steps down from Covid response

- Full office Risk Assessments to be completed
- Offices open 5 days per week – Risk assessed numbers to ensure social distancing can be maintained
- Blended approach of home and office working to be adopted
- Larger meetings (6+) to open in line with room limits and face coverings and social distancing
- Home visits can commence
- Public access to offices open
- Activities in community halls and shared communal spaces may be able to start, subject to review and approved risk assessments
- Limited number of visitors permitted into supported temporary accommodation provision

Government actions

At least 5 weeks after Step 3

All subject to review

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- No legal limit

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Remaining businesses, including nightclubs

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel

EVENTS

- No legal limit on life events
- Larger events

This page is intentionally left blank

1. Increase and sustain workforce engagement

Talk to and consult with our people at every stage of new ways of working and innovation.



3. Build a sustainable workforce

Attract and retain the right people with the right skills who demonstrate our behaviours.



5. Invest in skills, knowledge and competencies

Investing in our people, encouraging and empowering them, to learn and develop so SCH is fit for the present and ready for the future.



7. Increase awareness of health and wellbeing

Provide an environment where our people feel valued, supported and can thrive at work.



2. Build a diverse, innovative, progressive, collaborative and healthy organisation

Making our organisation forward thinking, where we listen to suggestions and improve.

A diverse place where we work together, live our HEART values and achieve our vision.

4. Recognise and reward success

Create an environment that values and recognises people's contribution to the success of the organisation.

6. Strengthen performance and progression

Continue to develop a culture of innovation and continuous improvement by managing performance and development of our people.

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

FULL BOARD MEETING: MONDAY 29 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMER SERVICE TRANSFORMATION AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To submit the following for the Board's consideration:

- (i) A revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- (ii) A proposed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan for 2021-2022.
- (iii) A draft Public Sector Equality Duty Report for publication by 31 March 2021.

2. Recommendation – Items for Approval

2.1 The Human Resources and Remuneration Committee considered the following papers on 15 March 2021. The Committee recommends to the Board that these are approved.

- (i) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (Appendix 1).
- (ii) The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan for 2021-2022 (Appendix 2).

2.2 The Human Resources and Remuneration Committee also considered the draft Public Sector Equality Duty Report (Appendix 3) and recommends that the Chief Executive is delegated the authority to approve the final version for publication on 31 March 2021.

3. Recommendation – Items for Noting

3.1 The Executive Leadership and Senior Leadership Team will consider a range of national and local data over the coming months to further strengthen SCH's approach to equality and inclusion and develop ideas to set specific targets for the Board's consideration. Data to be considered will include internal information about customer and staff profiles, housing options and national information about emerging issues such as domestic abuse, hate crime and governing body membership.

3.2 Arrangements for monitoring and reporting at governance levels are in line with those for overall corporate delivery plans. In addition:

- (i) The Senior Leadership Team will ensure that activities are co-ordinated and monitor progress on a bi-monthly basis.
- (ii) The Executive Leadership Team will receive half-yearly progress reports with relevant alerts about significant developments or non-progress. The

Executive Leadership Team will inform the Board of any strategic implications.

4. Background and Context

- 4.1 The Board considered SCH's Equality and Diversity Policy in 2015. The attached policy, attached at Appendix 1, has been revised to reinforce SCH's commitment to meeting moral, social and legal responsibilities as a public body. The policy reflects the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and SCH's Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 4.2 The definitions of the concepts of equality, equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion included at the outset of the policy have been informed by refresher training delivered to managers and frontline staff in 2019/2020. The policy has been developed with input from three Teams: Executive Leadership, Senior Leadership and Front Line Managers.
- 4.3 The revised policy reflects SCH's HEART values: Honesty, Excellence, Achieving together, Respect and Transparency. Each of the values are described from diversity and inclusion perspectives.
- 4.4 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Delivery Plan, attached at Appendix 2, reflects SCH's long term strategic aims and objectives for 2020-2025. It is aligned with the annual Delivery Plan for 2021-2022 to enable individuals, teams and Directorates to reflect fairness and inclusion in their day-to-day work and priority work areas. Other ongoing initiatives, such as Passion in People, Apprentice Scheme, Staff Health and Wellbeing, staff surveys and other engagement work done via Cultural Ambassadors have input from an inclusion perspective.
- 4.5 The Delivery Plan identifies 45 specific actions to be delivered by March 2022, subject to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The action list is not exhaustive as items will be added as required, for example to reflect legislative changes.
- 4.6 The attached Public Sector Equality Duty Report sets out examples of equality actions delivered during 2020/2021. The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including nationality and ethnicity), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 4.7 Public Bodies have a legal duty to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. This is known as the 'Equality Duty'. This means that public bodies must:
 - (i) Have due regard to equality when carrying out our duties.
 - (ii) Annually publish relevant and proportionate information to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty. The information should be in an accessible format and show how the Public Body has:
 - Eliminated unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
 - Advanced equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
 - Fostered good relations between people from different groups.

(iii) Set specific, measurable equality objectives every four years from April 2012.

4.8 In line with discussions with actively engaged tenants some time ago, the report provides real but anonymised case studies to demonstrate diversity and inclusion in practice and is suitable to cater for a wide audience.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 No Specific financial considerations have been made in compiling this report.

6. Equality and Diversity Implications

6.1 The attached policy and action plan are intrinsically linked to delivering the Board's vision and operational plans for the coming year.

7. Risk Management Implications

7.1 The current COVID-19 pandemic continues to have an impact on service demand and delivery. Meeting on-going demand remains a key priority for SCH. Therefore, there is a risk that some actions outlined in the Delivery Plan might not be achieved by March 2022.

8. Value for Money and Efficiency Considerations/Implications

8.1 No specific VfM considerations have been raised within the context of this report.

9. Tenant Involvement/Consultation

9.1 No specific tenant involvement or consultation took place in compiling this report.

10. Consistent with Strategic Vision

10.1 The content of this report is consistent with the SCH Vision to "Provide Homes; Improve Wellbeing and Strengthen Communities" and the themes strategic priorities.

REPORT AUTHOR: Kevin Bennett
Executive Director of Customer Service Transformation and
Business Support
0121 779 8857 / 0770 2731718
kevinbennett@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 1

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY

1 Policy statement

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) is committed to the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion. We define these concepts as:

- a. **Equality** is being fair and ensuring that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics. The law defines protected characteristics as age, disability, gender reassignment/transgender, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including colour, nationality, ethnicity and national origin), religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- b. **Equality of opportunity** means giving people an equal chance to access SCH's homes, services and jobs. It also means removing barriers for people who may be disadvantaged so that they have the same opportunities as their peers.
- c. **Diversity** recognises that, though people have things in common with each other, they are also different in many ways. Diversity is what makes us different because of protected characteristics and other things such as life experiences.
- d. **Inclusion** is where differences are seen as a benefit, and where perspectives and differences are recognised, leading to better decisions. Inclusion is about bringing diversity into action, allowing everyone to feel included and where people are proud to pull together to create an environment of mutual respect. Inclusion is also where people can feel that they belong because they are seen and valued for who they are and they can be their true.

SCH meets its legal and moral obligations. We do not discriminate against any individuals or groups. Victimisation, bullying or harassment is not tolerated. We comply with the Equality Act 2010, other relevant legislation, statutory codes and guidance.

We positively embrace and celebrate diversity and promote an inclusive culture in our role as an employer and a provider of homes and services. We acknowledge that everyone is different, and that people have different needs and perspectives. Each individual brings their own contribution, experience, skills and knowledge to make Solihull Community Housing a successful organisation.

This policy applies to everyone at SCH, including the Board and employees, apprentices, volunteers, residents, service users and external partners with whom we work, such as contractors, consultants and other agencies.

2 Policy aims

Our values are Honesty, Excellence, Achieving together, Respect and Transparency.

SCH's long-term equality aims are intricately linked to the organisational values as follows:

Honesty

Our expectations of both ourselves and others are set out explicitly as follows:

- a. Treating people with dignity and respect and striving to create an environment where individual differences are recognised and valued.

- b. Ensuring that external agents and other partners operate this policy or demonstrate that they have their own appropriate equality policy and practices that promote fairness and inclusion.
- c. Operating a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and reserving the right to terminate contracts where this policy is found to have been breached.
- d. Taking action to protect employees who are at risk of violence while carrying out their duties.

Excellence

We serve our customers in the best possible way by:

- a. Ensuring that they have the same opportunities to access to our homes, services and jobs and implementing policies in a fair way.
- b. Regularly reviewing the make-up of our local communities and residents to ensure that our services remain accessible and meet individual needs.
- c. Tailoring service delivery procedures whenever possible to meet needs and personal circumstances of residents, customers or employees.
- d. Putting customers at the heart of everything by listening to and learning from them.
- e. Advancing equality of opportunity by undertaking Fair Treatment Assessments to assess the impact of our decisions on residents and local communities.

Achieving together

We value partnership working to meet diverse needs by:

- a. Implementing strong cross-departmental working within SCH to deliver the best services and meet the needs of customers and employees.
- b. Securing and maintaining effective partnerships with Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and others to meet housing needs, delivering excellent services, developing innovation and identifying emerging needs of the local community.
- c. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults who are vulnerable and at risk of harm.

Respect

We treat people with dignity and care by:

- a. Recognising that everyone has the right to equality of opportunity and fair treatment, opposing discrimination.
- b. Taking positive action to redress inequality and disadvantage.
- c. Promoting our code of conduct and values to ensure that we act professionally and treat people with dignity and respect.
- d. Delivering services in a sensitive manner by treating residents as individuals by working flexibly to meet their needs.
- e. Fostering good relations between people through celebrating events that help to promote community cohesion.
- f. Creating a working environment where employees can thrive and reach their full potential.
- g. Making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to remove disability-related barriers.
- h. Undertaking regular staff surveys to help identify trends or issues that may need addressing.

Transparency

We publicise our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and report achievements by:

- a. Making this policy available on our website and to anyone who requests it.
- b. Aligning our equality plans with corporate objectives and delivery plans to help embed fairness and inclusion throughout the organisation.
- c. Developing service standards so that customers know what they can expect from us.
- d. Empowering service users by making them aware of their rights and entitlements as appropriate.
- e. Offering options for accessing homes and services and giving customer feedback.
- f. Actively monitoring the accessibility of our services to ensure fairness and inclusion.
- g. Publicising our achievements.
- h. Publicising workforce information including differences in pay between men and women and use the information to develop initiatives and interventions to address inequality issues.

3 Strategic aims and objectives for 2020-2025

Our equality objectives are embedded in the key strategic priorities which provide a framework for everything we do. The following strategic aims and objectives drive our performance management infrastructure that enables us to demonstrate accountability and report progress.

Strategic aim	Strategic objectives
Creating homes	Creating homes for the future to meet the needs of our customers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in social housing in partnership with SMBC • Provide an efficient and effective repairs service • Ensure homes are safe • Data driven green approach to our managed portfolio
More than bricks and mortar	A clear and accessible service offer to improve the lives of customers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance service offers to support our wider customer base to achieve positive outcomes • Reducing homelessness and risk of homelessness across the borough • Delivering excellent core housing management services that are integrated and highly visible
Strengthening communities	Enable resilient and thriving communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to create resilient and thriving communities • Implement a Community Engagement roadmap to empower customers and involve them in the heart of decision making
Excellent customer service	Deliver excellent customer service, consistently using community and customer driven insight

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services • Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight • Delivering services for customers in the way they want and reduce customer effort
Passion in people	<p>Creating a great place to work, where the whole team feels valued, empowered and motivated, with tools needed to deliver excellent service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting and developing our staff

4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2020-2022

The plan at **Appendix 1** sets out the priority actions for delivery by March 2021. The Plan reflects SCH's long-term strategic and equality objectives that are set out above and key tasks included in departmental team plans.

The operational delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will be overseen by the Senior Leadership Team who will report overall progress to the Executive Management Team.

The Board will receive progress reports through routine performance management of the organizational delivery plan.

Key achievements and will be highlighted in the Annual Public Sector Equality Duty Report and the Annual Gender Pay Gap Report.

5 Roles and responsibilities

Everyone at SCH has a responsibility to implement and promote this policy. Individuals and groups have specific responsibilities as follows:

- a. **Board members** exercise leadership through policy and strategy approval, holding executives to account for performance and demonstrating appropriate behaviour and conduct.
- b. **Executive and Senior Leadership Teams** are responsible for visible leadership, the overall implementation of the policy and strategy, reporting performance and setting standards for exemplar behaviour and conduct.
- c. **Direct employees, apprentices, volunteers and contractors** are responsible for familiarising themselves with and acting in line with this policy.
- d. **Managers:**
 - Must exercise leadership, demonstrate strong application of the policy in their area of work and model appropriate behaviour and conduct.
 - Will ensure that their staff are familiar with this policy, have the necessary advice and guidance to implement the policy and know how to report relevant incidents and get support.
 - Are required to take speedy and appropriate action to deal with complaints/incidents indicating actual or potential breach of this policy, in line with established employment practices, policies and procedures fairly and consistently, and for highlighting and addressing outcomes and reporting practices that could lead to discrimination.

6 Policy review

SCH will keep this policy under review and amend it as necessary.

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 2

SCH Delivery Plan 2021 - 2022

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PLAN

Customer Service and Business Support

Strategic objective 1: Implement a Community Engagement roadmap to empower customers and involve them in the heart of decision making and further support thriving communities

Work package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Embed the Engagement Framework with customers and communities, with continued validation and collaboration with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve TPAS Accreditation (champion standard) Embed and mature the refreshed resident 'SCHAPE' Panel to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase representation, inclusivity and participation in co-designing services throughout the year. Design an effective interface with the SCH Board Design and implement an engagement strategy to support the Kingshurst Village Centre regeneration Implement a digital engagement plan to increase 'My SCH' portal, social media and website activity Refresh the content of the SCH website using customer insight. Ensure content and services are accurate and updated 	Q1 Q3- Q4 Q1- Q2 Q2 Q1	SCHAPE <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out a Fair Treatment Assessment for Resident Engagement Recruit diverse members Deliver EDI training to members Reflect EDI in scrutiny projects Kingshurst Village <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain views of diverse customers to help shape the Engagement Strategy Ensure that EDI is reflected in all aspects of the regeneration process Digital engagement <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support SCHAPE to scrutinise accessibility of SCH's Digital Offer by disadvantaged groups Work with diverse group of customers to support website improvements
Support and develop Locality Working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Council to streamline the partnership framework overseeing Locality Working and Thriving Communities 	Q2	Thriving communities <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver at least 3 community events focussing on: Dementia Action Week (17-23 May)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a business case and delivery plan to implement a Resident Academy Work with partners to enhance SCH's contribution to employment support activity 	Q2 Q1- Q2	Carers Week/World Elder Abuse (June) Black History Month (October) Resident Academy/Employment support 10. Work with locality partners to set EDI targets for employment/apprenticeship activities
Strategic objective 2: Delivering services for customers in the way they want and reduce customer effort			
Work package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Mature the SCH customer satisfaction framework across the business to support effective customer operations, increasing customer satisfaction and improving complaint performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out key customer journey reviews across all services using Lean Six Sigma methodology aligned to the SCH Service Standards for 2021/22 Develop documented Standard operating procedures across key service areas as a prerequisite to Workflow mobilisation Deliver the Contact Centre improvement plan and revised operating model focused on efficiency, quality & technology Deliver and embed complaints handling processes to align with the Housing Ombudsman Code of Guidance. 	Q1- Q4 Q2 Q2 Q2	Customer journey mapping 11. Reflect the experience of those needing tailored services from SCH in assessing/improving customer journeys Customer complaints 12. Deliver the 'Reasonable Adjustments' policy when handling complaints
Strategic objective 3: Continuously improving services and processes through customer insight			
Work package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Strengthen business intelligence and improvement to develop data led services and a rigorous approach to continuous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a data & business intelligence framework within SCH to improve data quality, accuracy and standardisation Strengthen the SCH data insight capability to include analytics across wider operational services and align performance to industry peers through benchmarking 	Q3 Q1- Q4	Customer insight 13. Ensure that customer insight gathering tools deliver a clear understanding of views of diverse groups of customers 14. Reflect EDI in STAR and other customer satisfaction surveys

service improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed digital data analytics to demonstrate growing digital engagement • Embed automated performance dashboards to inform day to day operational delivery and decision making • Establish an Innovation Fund to facilitate development of innovative service delivery based on evidence and good practice • Implement a quarterly customer perception tracker, in line with emerging national policy • Review opportunities to measure and validate the quality of SCH services through external accreditation and/or industry awards 	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q1</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>	
Through a 12-month Information Technology (IT) delivery plan implement technology improvements and upgrades including enablers to digital working for staff and customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise a business wide cloud-based workflow system (to be fully operational in 2022/23) • Implement further high volume/ low complexity services into the 'My SCH' portal to increase digital uptake • Implement wider Office 365 package to digitally Enable the SCH workforce • Complete a business review for 'web chat' functionality within the Contact Centre • Full review of website functionality as a digital enabler / capability 	<p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q3</p> <p>Q2</p> <p>Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>	
Strategic objective 4: Embedding a clear approach to supporting vulnerable customers across all SCH services			
Work package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Define and embed the service offer for vulnerable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the new Vulnerability Policy and Priority Service Register within SCH 	Q1-Q4	<p>British Standard Framework</p> <p>15. Deliver an inclusive service approach through customer-facing workflows</p>

customers across SCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope the achievement of the BSI 18477 Inclusive Service Provision framework for SCH to be accredited with a British Standard • Instigate the BSI 18477 accreditation audit and achieve the Standard • Identify & internally recruit Inclusive Service / Vulnerability Champions 	Q1 Q2-Q3 Q2	16. Develop a clear Service Offer for individual customers who need tailored approaches to receive SCH services 17. Deliver dedicated training for Vulnerability Champions
Deliver our safeguarding responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SCH Safeguarding, Exploitation and Domestic Abuse (SEDA) group to continue embed standards and good practice across the organisation • Complete organisational and multi-agency case audits as required by the LSCP and SSAB • Utilise the Learning Pool and other online learning opportunities to enhance SCH and multi-agency training • Produce an action plan for developing a whole organisation approach to domestic abuse • Assess requirements and capacity for seeking Domestic Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation 	Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q2 Q3	Training 18. Provide dedicated training for frontline staff on Domestic Abuse
Strategic objective 5: Supporting and developing our staff			
Work packages	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Increase workforce engagement, Health and Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design a blueprint for smarter working at SCH, including the blending of remote and office-based approaches • Work in partnership with the Staff Engagement Group to capture employee views in addition to the employee engagement survey and involve staff in organisational plans. • Maintain the ELT Roadshows with quarterly organisational wide leadership interaction. 	Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4	Blended working 19. Reflect the needs of individual staff members in the practical application of Blended Working arrangements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Risk assessments for staff with disabilities ○ Pregnant women

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve Thrive at Work Bronze award • Complete quarterly wellbeing activities business wide. • Deliver staff conference (Subject to Covid) • Deliver staff awards event (subject to Covid-19) 	<p>Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q3</p> <p>Q3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staff who might be facing domestic abuse in the home <p>Staff Awards</p> <p>20. Ensure that staff identified for awards reflect the diversity of SCH employee profile</p>
Build a Progressive, Collaborative and Healthy organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement structural, contractual and policy changes that support our corporate goals and ensure they are applied fairly and consistently and in line with our values and behaviours. • Implement and embed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and Action Plan • Develop further training/ awareness around mental health first aid and develop a culture of openness and positivity that reflects in the SCH culture. 	<p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q2-Q3</p>	<p>Passion In People</p> <p>Staff Awards</p> <p>21. Ensure that projects arising from PIP reflect SCH's EDI principles</p> <p>22. Deliver EDI mandatory training via Learning Pool</p> <p>23. Ensure EDI is reflected in On-Boarding for all new staff and board members</p> <p>24. Reflect EDI across SCH via:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Diversity calendar ○ Virtual events
Ensure SCH has a Sustainable Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the recruitment process at SCH to ensure the organisation can select people from the widest possible pool, appointing those with the right values, skills motivation and competencies. • Using our appraisal processes and organisational talent pool, create opportunities for people to move into different roles and be as flexible as we can to meet both theirs and the organisation's needs. 	<p>Q3</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>	<p>Recruitment</p> <p>25. Achieve Level 2 of the Disability Confident Scheme</p> <p>Publications</p> <p>26. Publish Gender Pay Gap Report in line with government guidelines</p> <p>27. Publish the Public Sector Equality Duty Report in line with government guidelines</p>
Strengthen performance and progression through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCH will recognise high performance and outstanding organisational commitment throughout the business using a 'recognition framework. 	<p>Q2</p>	<p>Diverse workforce</p> <p>28. Set targets to recruit disabled and BAME staff at SLT and FLM levels</p>

investing in skills, competencies and recognition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further embed the Leadership and Development Programme across the organisation fostering a culture of high performance, talent, coaching and succession. 	Q1-Q4	
--	--	-------	--

Asset Management and Development

Strategic objective 1: Data driven green approach to our managed portfolio

Work package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Use stock condition data to inform stock investment decisions including Options Appraisal to evaluate the stock we manage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the 2 year (2020-2022) interim Asset Management Strategy, Publish a joint (SCH/Solihull Council) 5-year strategy setting out the approach to managing and maintaining housing assets. Continue to develop and embed the asset performance tool Identify archetype and/or location of poorly performing assets through the stock performance tool and apply options appraisal methodology to poor performing stock The agreed capital programme 2022/23 is informed by the updated stock appraisal model Embed the programme for routine collection of stock condition data – 5 year rolling (20% of stock per annum) 	Q1-Q4 Q3 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4	Disabled adaptations 29. Carry out a comprehensive review of the Adaptations Service 30. Assess disabled adaptations through stock condition surveys to ensure that physical attributes continue to meet the needs of people living in adapted homes 31. Identify projects where communal areas/facilities would benefit from disabled adaptations (e.g., widening pathways)
Understand the environmental impact of both SCH Operations and the Social Housing portfolio and start planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider and propose programmes of works to increase the SAP rating for properties below SAP rating EPC Band D to include the setting and monitoring of targets and forecasting financial implications. 	Q3	

to achieve net zero carbon targets by 2030 in partnership with SMBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider options and propose alternative greener solutions including financial appraisal, to replace inefficient storage heaters to 5 high rise Quantify carbon emission levels for SCH managed stock Quantify carbon emission levels for SCH business operations Set the strategic approach to carbon reduction in the SCH Energy and Environmental Sustainability Strategy linking back to the Asset Management Strategy and aligned with SMBC Net Zero targets 	Q1-Q4 Q1 Q2 Q2-Q4	
Working with our residents to reduce fuel poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with residents and help to reduce their fuel and utility costs through signposting to initiatives providing free support and advice 	Q1-Q4	32. Carry out a Fair Treatment Assessment on resident engagement processes for reducing fuel poverty
Strategic objective 2: Ensure our homes are safe			
Work Package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Embed a culture of safer homes across SCH staff and customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with West Midlands Fire Service and service areas across SCH to deliver a programme of events to focus on building safety Contribute to / produce quarterly newsletters, Social media campaigns, website updates to inform our customers with a specific focus on a safety related topic. Recruit, train and promote the importance of Resident Safety Champions Ensure staff are competent and skill sets are current through up-to-date training 	Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4	33. Carry out a comprehensive review of the customer experience of health and safety related services 34. Recognising diversity in the recruitment of Safer Homes Champions and ensure that Champions are from diverse backgrounds

Collaborate with SMBC to ensure legislative requirements relating to Building Safety are achieved and compliance maintained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play an active role in the joint SMBC/SCH Building Safety Project Board to prepare for the implementation of new legislation • Through the SCH Building Safety Group, prepare to implement agreed SCH responsibilities emerging from new building safety legislation • Robust monitoring of compliance across all areas of building safety through SCH and Solihull MBC Corporate Health and Safety Board and Quarterly Monitoring Board 	Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4	35. Consider equality implications for implementing the new legal requirements.
Delivery of Building Safety Related Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sprinkler installation - mobilise and commence delivery of sprinklers, completing 12 blocks by year end • Spandrel Panel replacement – progress through planning and mobilisation process, and commence delivery • Commission structural surveys of all Large Panel System High rise buildings and report on findings • Pilot 2 high rise buildings with the fitting of externally mounted closing devices on apartment fire doors – to inform an ongoing inspection process 	Q1 ongoing Q1 ongoing Q4 Q3	
Utilise technology to underpin and enhance approach to building safety to include future reporting requirements and recording compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further develop the use of Quick Response (QR) codes to provide up to date relevant information for our residents • Implement 'Golden Thread' approach to centralise building specific compliance / safety information in a central location with robust server resilience • Agree our building safety management system in response to the Building Safety Bill so that it encompasses all compliance activity • Implement a Public Portal to report / record the 'Tenants Voice' for all safety related issues – to include workflow and audit capability 	Q1-Q4 Q2 Q4 Q2	

Strategic objective 3: Optimise the value and impact of the property maintenance service

Work Package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Improve efficiency and delivery of the Maintenance Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement actions arising from the review of the Asset Management service and VFM benchmarking exercises. Complete an options appraisal based on the benchmark information to explore potential opportunities to grow internal work force to deliver some works currently delivered by external contractors Use procurement and contract management activities to maximise quality, value and effectiveness of our services 	<p>Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>	36. Carry out a comprehensive review of EDI in procurement procedures and contractor management processes
Review policies and procedures to provide customer centric service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce repairs advocates recruited from our customer base to work directly with the team to ensure residents are actively involved in helping to shape and inform our delivery and improve satisfaction levels. Review customer recharge policy to ensure clarity and consistent VFM approach Implementation of our agreed service standards for Repairs and Voids to drive up the quality of our homes Formulate an action plan to prioritise and address the main drivers of customer dissatisfaction (Damp and Mould, Plumbing repairs etc.) Complete repairs staff focussed customer service training Continue with customer journey mapping exercise to highlight duplication and areas of improvement. 	<p>Q1</p> <p>Q2</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p> <p>Q1</p> <p>Q2</p> <p>Q1</p>	
Review IT provision to ensure future proofing and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete an options appraisal to benchmark existing systems with new technologies to reduce costs, increase efficiency and improve tenant services. 	Q2	

Strategic objective 1: Delivering excellent core housing management services that are integrated and highly visible			
Work Package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Increase visibility and responsiveness of Tenancy and Estate Management services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review digital technology options for mobile working across the service area Review the Neighbourhood Service delivery model through consultation with residents and staff, to achieve higher visibility and customer satisfaction 	Q2-Q3 Q3	37. Identify ways in which diverse residents can give views on tenancy and estate management services
Carry out a comprehensive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of structure, process and practice to improve the offer to customers and the wider community, with a 	Q3-Q4	

service review of our Neighbourhood Services Team	<p>key focus on dealing with anti-social behaviour and estate management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop insight and reporting tools to improve satisfaction and responsiveness of the service 	Q3-Q4	
Re-engineer the income collection / arrears recovery process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce new and efficient income collection process Introduce a robust data insight and analytics tool to support the team in reducing arrears owed Strengthen the offer to customers provided by the Money Advice Team Increase rent payments via digital means Reposition the work of the Eviction Prevention Panel following challenges in 2020-21 in recovering rent arrears owed 	<p>Q1-Q2</p> <p>Q1-Q2</p> <p>Q1</p> <p>Q1-Q2</p> <p>Q1</p>	<p>Income management review</p> <p>38. Carry out an FTA on current processes to influence and reflect diversity in revised policy and approaches to income management</p>
Deliver on new cleaning contract, focusing on quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure and mobilise a new cleaning contract Strengthen staff management capacity to oversee cleaning performance and contract Greater use of insight and digital tools to monitor contract delivery and quality 	<p>Q3</p> <p>Q3</p> <p>Q1-Q4</p>	<p>Communal cleaning</p> <p>39. Carry out an FTA on current processes to influence and reflect diversity in revised policy and approaches to communal cleaning</p>
Carry out a review of the Tenancy Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the policy and embed approach to ensure this meets the needs of customers 	Q3	
Work in partnership with the Council to deliver the Kingshurst Village Centre regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete relocation of displaced residents 	Q4	<p>Communal cleaning</p> <p>40. Continue to work on the Kingshurst Regeneration FTA throughout the process</p>

Maximising use and occupation of housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote options to support customers move home where they are under-occupying properties, so as to free up family sized accommodation 	Q1-Q4	
Strategic objective 2: Enhanced service offers to support our wider customer base to achieve positive outcomes			
Work Package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Deliver activities to support people moving into new SCH tenancies to enable tenancy sustainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver two pre-tenancy workshops (half yearly) Enhance and promote clear referral pathways to employment and training opportunities available for new customers, building on existing and new partner relationships 	Q2 & Q4 Q2	Allocations 41. Complete an FTA on Allocations to influence revisions to the Allocations Policy
Subject to approval / consultation, implement the revised Housing Allocation Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out consequent system changes Publication and promotion of policy 	Q3 Q4	
Maximise opportunities for access to, and growth of the Wellbeing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and launch a new 3-year pricing model for the Wellbeing Service Carry out an evidence-based study to establish the need for a 'low-level' support offer aimed at some of our more vulnerable older customers 	Q3 Q2-Q3	
Enabling access of Wellbeing customers to new digital telecare technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of a 3-year digital telecare switchover plan for customers with analogue equipment Procurement of a telecare equipment and service provider 	Q3 Q3	(covered at item 35)
Establish Saxon Court as a flagship scheme and community hub for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Saxon Court service to become a community hub for wellbeing services 	Q4 Q4	

integrated wellbeing services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Intergenerational activities and becoming a focal point for information and guidance for older people services in the north of the borough				
Supporting innovative and flexible use of Disabled Facilities Grants to further support people in their homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Working with social care teams and SCH Asset Management to maximise opportunities for customers, enhancing quality of life and occupation of homes through innovative and creative technology through DFG support		Q3-Q4		
Work packages	Milestones	By	Equality Action		Progress
Progress accommodation options for the Home Options Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop and manage project plan for front line co-located accommodation and services for Home Options and Solihull Youth Hub		Q1-Q4		
Review Housing Options team structure / arrangements to maximise service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop insight and reporting tools to improve satisfaction and responsiveness of the serviceWorking in partnership with the Council, ensure a robust appraisal of the range of funding streams for the serviceDevelop a Temporary Accommodation Strategy in conjunction with SMBC		Q3-Q4	Temporary Accommodation 42. Complete an FTA on Temporary Accommodation to influence the revised strategy	
			Q3-Q4		
			Q3-Q4		
Strengthen the focus on prevention of homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the Housing Options Development PlanEmbed and further develop the 'Call before you serve' approach aimed at private sector landlords		Q1 Q1		
Further develop flexible accommodation offers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Expand the Private Sector Leasing serviceDevelop a robust alternative offer to the use of hotel accommodation as temporary accommodation		Q1		
			Q3-Q4		

Expand the tools available to gather and improve customer satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Open' access to the customer satisfaction tool within Jigsaw, the IT system used by the Home Options Service 	Q2	
Strategic objective 4: Working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to create resilient and thriving communities			
Work Package	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Continued support and contribution to the SMBC Strategic Environmental Contract (SEC) review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful input and contribution to SEC review • Review of Neighbourhood working practices and processes to support delivery 	Q1- Q4 Q1- Q4	
Deliver on commitments contained in the SCH / SMBC tenure neutral anti-social behaviour service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the revised ASB SLA for the service across the Neighbourhood Services Team • Develop and support approach to improving customer satisfaction of the service to deliver the KPI • Ensure robust SLA review meetings and appropriate follow-up action with SMBC 	Q1- Q4 Q1 Q1-Q4	ASB Service 43. Complete a Fair Treatment Assessment on the ASB service to influence the SLA and associated policies and procedures
Develop a seamless SCH / Solihull Council approach to estate inspections, focusing on quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint SCH / Solihull Council estate inspection programme, targeting one estate per month to capture wider environmental issues • Review specification of the contract with Solihull Council to establish effective management of high-density sites of forestry/trees across SCH stock 	Q1 Q3	

Work packages	Milestones	By	Equality Action
Reinforce SCH's commitment to corporate responsibility and good governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake 360-degree Board appraisal Maintain rigour in risk management through organisational compliance with the JCAD system Complete a self-assessment against the revised NHF Code of Governance 	Q1 Q1-Q4 Q1	Board/Committee papers 44. Have a robust approach to reflecting EDI in governing body papers
Provide assurance on SCH's approach to health and safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete health and safety audit Embed the SHE Assure framework across the business 	Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4	45. Carry out a Fair Treatment Assessment on health and safety
Embed improvements to procurement function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement revised procurement framework 	Q1	
Consistently review the SCH framework for emergency planning and business continuity in response to unforeseen events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To keep under constant review our Covid-19 response and recovery planning, and adapt services as appropriate 	Q1-Q4	Covid-19 46. Ensure that learning from the pandemic covers EDI

This page is intentionally left blank



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

let's do the right thing for Solihull



By washing
our hands



By wearing a
face covering



By keeping
our distance



By getting
a test

Meeting the Equality Duty

March 2021

1 Introduction

This report sets out some of the highlights of how we champion inclusion and diversity through role modelling the right behaviours at all levels because it is the right thing to do.

Solihull Community Housing (SCH) is creating a culture where everyone contributes to meet our vision to **Provide Homes; Improve Wellbeing and Strengthen Communities.**

The Equality Act 2010 that protects people from discrimination on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The 'Public Sector Equality Duty' are to:

- a. **Remove or minimise disadvantages** suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- b. **Take steps to meet the needs of people** from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- c. **Encourage people from protected groups to participate** in public life and in any other activity where participation is disproportionately low.
- d. **Annually publish relevant and proportionate information** demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty.
- e. **Set specific and measurable equality objectives** every four years.

2 Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge to everyone across the world. The 'lockdown' that began in March 2020 has impacted everyone and Solihull Community Housing residents, staff and customers are no exception.



Whilst the delivery of services have been exceptionally challenging, the need to come together to support each other has never been greater. The crisis have reinforced the importance of partnership working across teams within SCH, with our residents, between SCH and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and local community, voluntary and faith organisations.

The lockdown meant a rapid reaction to amend day-to-day operations overnight. The repairs service, a service most valued by residents, was restricted to emergency and 'life and limb' repairs. We continued to support our vulnerable residents through the well-being and care teams, worked with partners to remove rough sleepers and the street homeless to protect them from the virus. There was no gradual move to 'home working' and 'social distancing' but staff rapidly moved to agile and flexible working arrangements.

The impact of Covid-19 has been enormous on our 'normal' operations and delivery plans. This report reflects our equality journey to ensure safe, Covid-free environment for residents and staff and play our part to support vulnerable customers.

3 About Solihull and SCH

Solihull is an affluent Borough with an attractive environment, quality of life, aspirational housing and excellent schools. However, there is a challenging prosperity gap between the wards of Chelmsley Wood, Kingshurst & Fordbridge and Smith's Wood in North Solihull and the rest of the Borough. North Solihull has a relatively higher population density, less green space per head and educational attainment, employment and income levels are notably lower. Although the Solihull Place Survey 2020 found that 89% of residents are more satisfied with the local area as a place to live compared with 76% across England, the satisfaction rate drops to 80% for residents in North Solihull where the majority of socially rented properties are.

We manage around 10,000 tenanted homes, 1,200 leasehold properties and 5,000 garages on behalf of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC), the majority of which are in North Solihull.

We also deliver SMBC's statutory duties on housing options, manage the Council Housing Register, deal with emergency homelessness and provide anti-social services to all Borough residents.

SCH employs around 300 people. Equality is part of the way we work and deliver services so that everyone is treated fairly, and diversity is valued. The accessibility of our services, homes and jobs is routinely reviewed for equality impact and services are tailored to meet individual circumstances.

4 Equality journey during Covid-19

Our response to supporting vulnerable customers to stay safe, warm and well

a. Customer Wellbeing

We provide a range of services, including Safe and Sound, Solihull Independent Living, Assisted Technology Telecare, Home Hazard Assessments to our own tenants and private paying customers living in the Borough.

The Wellbeing Team supports around 2150 customers. During the Covid-19 pandemic the Team has continued to maintain contact with service users by phone and making home visits where necessary. They were fully briefed and provided with personal protective clothing to keep customers and staff safe.

An example of how we have responded to meet the needs of vulnerable customers include Mrs J who has early onset of dementia and was cared for by her daughter prior the Covid-19 pandemic. The daughter is unable to look after her mother who was prone to trips and falls and was forgetting to take medication. Our staff assessed Mrs J, arranged a 'Telecare Pills Dispenser' that prompts Mrs J to take medicine at the correct times. We also provided Mrs J with a 'falls pendent' that automatically alerts us when Mrs J falls. Her family are reassured of Mrs J's safety and enables her to live independently.

b. Extra-care housing



Saxon Court is a purpose-built development providing self-contained housing with care and support to 51 older, disabled and frail residents. To keep residents safe from the Covid-19 virus, families and friends were unable to visit residents. A special 'visiting pod' was created so that residents could see their loved ones during the Christmas festive season. The pod has separate entrances for residents and visitors to keep them safe. A booking system was introduced to allow for a good cleaning regime in-between visit.

c. Customer and Community Support Project and Operation Shield

Staff across a range of teams within SCH worked together to contact our most vulnerable residents to find out about their needs such as medical supplies, food, heating, emergency repairs and general resilience.

The initial activity in March 2020 included distributing a dedicated newsletter about Covid-19 for residents and staff, establishing a robust process for incoming telephone enquiries and enquiry escalation procedures to ensure 'right first time' approach.

We used guidance from the government to identify priority groups to proactively contact 3570 residents.

CATEGORY	DATA USED	NUMBER IDENTIFIED
Over 70 years of age living in a High Rise	Age and tenancy	233

Over 70 Years of age Not living in a high rise		2375
Others living in a high rise	Age, tenancy and a system identifier for a known disability	105
Others not living in a high rise	(mobility, mental health, learning, visual, hearing & speech)	857

The number of calls vary each week as required to reflect changes in government guidelines on lockdown restrictions and to take into account referrals made by our staff and local agencies. For example, in the November 2020 lockdown we made 293 calls to clinically extremely vulnerable people and 128 calls to vulnerable people. In the January 2021 the number of calls made to clinically extremely vulnerable people increased to 451. In addition, 94 calls were made to vulnerable residents and 217 people living in high-rise block were contacted.

Telephone call scripts allowed for conversation to establish which agency services they were previously accessing, how the social distancing restrictions were effecting this and generally how they were coping. This steered towards relevant signposting and support activity.

Systems and protocols were put in place to continue with efforts to make contact where calls remained unanswered, including a door.

Where contact was made, a range of questions were asked to elicit information about support and other immediate needs and identify potential risks for individuals. Outcomes from each call were tiered to the individual needs of each tenant

- *Safeguarding need for urgent immediate activity*

- *Requires signposting to one or more of the available support routes*
- *No current physical need but feeling isolated and wants a regular on-going calls*
- *No current concerns but given the dedicated hot line and email information should things change*

The core referral / signposting offer was around food, medication, hardship, rent and wellbeing. Where appropriate, there was collaboration with other statutory, community, voluntary and faith agencies to provide additional support.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to respond to government guidance and reacted to changing situations around lockdown.

The majority of the work was done by existing staff and additional resources were procured in addition to working with 12 trained volunteers from Marie Curie.



d. Emergency repairs



Although our planned maintenance programme has been halted, we continued to carry out emergency repairs in tenants' homes, ensured their gas boilers and appliances remained safe and in good working order, critical adaptations for people with disabilities and health and safety compliance checks.

e. Communal cleaning in apartment blocks



Extra cleaning regimes were introduced to sanitise communal areas at apartment blocks, such as door handles, buttons on door entry phones and lifts and other facilities.

f. Repairs to empty properties

We continued to carry out essential work in empty homes so that they were ready to let to people living in temporary accommodation and emergency shelters.

g. Safer homes

We continue to ensure that our homes remain well-maintained and safe. Examples include inspecting gas heating systems and ensuring boiler safety and completing fire safety checks.

Our estate assistants make regular checks to ensure the stairwells and communal areas in flats are in good order and

clear of rubbish. The high rises are fitted with fire doors throughout and these are regularly checked and maintained by our Fire Integrity Team. Lifts are also inspected on a regular basis. Work is underway to install fire sprinklers that help to save lives in the event of a fire. We are working with the Fire Service and Solihull Council to install sprinklers in high rise flats.

h. **Debt management and Money Advice**

Our Money Advice Team, which meets the 'Advice Quality Standards', has supported over 1200 people to receive over £1.25m of welfare benefits from April 2020 to January 2021 in addition to raising over £200k in Discretionary Housing Benefits payments.

The Team worked with 260 tenants who contacted SCH in the initial period of Covid-19 pandemic and who collectively owed us £134k of rent. The tenants were self-isolating, furloughed from work, had lost their jobs or were deemed to be vulnerable. We are continuing to work with them to remain in their homes and to keep rent arrears to as low as possible. This includes working with an external company who can arrange emergency fuel payments in crisis situations.

The profile of tenants supported through the Money Advice Team shows that:

- 45% of cases are households with young children
- Over two-thirds of the main tenants are aged 26-55
- 63% are unemployed
- 14% are disabled
- 23% are affected by fuel poverty
- 14% are Black and Asian Ethnic Minority

Examples of people supported include:

- A recovering drug addict who was at risk of self-harm. We arranged for her to have safe cooking facilities and utility supply and seek medical help.
- A customer who was unable to complete welfare claim forms within required timescales and was at risk of not receiving benefit entitlements. He was provided with a mobile phone to help access fuel top-up vouchers and supported him to buy essential food supplies.
- A vulnerable woman who had got into serious financial difficulties and was unable to cope. We worked with her to deal with water bills so that she could wash and clean and ensured that her electricity supply was restored.
- A customers who had a High Court Enforcement order due to multiple debt for water supply and Council tax. We worked with a charity to deal with the serious arrears and apply for welfare benefits.

i. **Safeguarding people from harm**



Staff were reminded about the need to safeguard people from 'Adult grooming', something that is more likely to happen when people feel isolated. Adult grooming is a gradual process through which abusers pick their

target to build up trust and then abuse people for sexual or financial gain. The process is also known as 'Mate Crime' and 'Catfishing' when it is done via the internet where the groomer pretends to be someone who they are not.

f. **Homelessness/Temporary housing**

The Home Options team have been carrying out homelessness and housing advice functions remotely. Customers are contacted via telephone and encouraged to use the Housing Jigsaw Customer Portal to access documentation and letters where possible. We continue to support those in hotel provision with a hot food delivery service three times a week and a food parcel service weekly in partnership with The Renewal Christian Centre & a local catering company. We also continue to support MCHLG's "Everyone in" campaign by providing supporting people who are sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough with emergency accommodation.

We have worked with St Basils, a special housing charity that supports young people, to develop 'Housing Pathways' to ensure that young people who are, or at risk of becoming homeless, can receive dedicated support. Measures have been put in place to support young adults who are released from youth detention centres/prisons, care leavers, those leaving hospital and people with mental or physical impairment.

Keeping our staff safe

a. **Remote working**

In line with government guidance, our offices have remained closed to visitors. The majority of our staff have continued to work remotely. Customers have been encouraged to contact us via the 'MyAccount' portal and by email. The telephone Contact Centre has been prioritising calls in three key areas: emergency repairs, wellbeing service and homelessness.

Employees have been provided with tools and technology to deliver services and work collaboratively and continue interaction through virtual meetings.



b. **Safer working**

Where SCH workplaces remain open, for field-based employees to access welfare facilities and stores, or for specific operational situations, offices and facilities comply with the Governments Covid-Secure requirements including enhanced cleaning regimes, provision of protective equipment, gloves and hand-sanitators.

The Board and committees have met virtually throughout the pandemic.

Staff who visit residents in their home have regular briefings about controls such as seeking information from customers before entering a property, social distancing, wearing of face coverings and other protective equipment.

5 Business as usual

We have continued to do the following:

- a. **Diversity in Board membership:** The Board strives to ensure that it has a diverse range of people who bring different voices and experiences that contribute to decision-making. An extensive recruitment exercise in 2020 resulted in significant

interest in Tenant Board Member position. Applicants represented a balance of age, gender and disability characteristics.

- b. **Remove communication and other barriers:** Customers can access information in different formats such as large print, audio, Braille and other languages and via interpreters. The Autumn 2020 newsletter for residents highlighted the availability of the magazine as an audio CD.

We use plain language in all our publications to support people with literacy difficulties and consider the use of Easy Read format where this is requested.

Providing a link to 'Google Translate' on our website enables users to translate information in more than 50 languages.

Where we know a customer's needs, we automatically send routine information such as rent statements in different formats where tenants' preferences are known.

Our offices have accessible facilities and portable hearing loops.

Although home visits are currently limited, they are offered to customers who cannot come to our offices, allow more time for disabled and older people to get to the front door and offer choices for repairs appointments, for example when people have hospital appointments or to avoid school run times.

- c. **Customer service standards:** We worked with residents and staff to review our service standards so that customers have clarity about the level and quality of service they can receive and when. The work resulted in the development and publication of service standards. Equality considerations formed a key part of the reviews to ensure that services meet

the diverse needs of residents and are provided in a way that does not create barriers or unfair treatment.

- d. **Create safer communities:** Our Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Team is trained to support residents who face anti-social behaviour ranging from noisy neighbours to serious issues such as racial harassment, hate crime, drug misuse and dealing and other criminal activity.

Between January 2020 and January 2021, we handled 13 cases of domestic abuse, a large proportion of which involved victims living in North Solihull.

An example of a domestic abuse case involved a neighbour reporting an incident that they had witnessed loud arguments and the victim's front door being damaged. We worked with the police and social workers to ensure that the victim and their children were moved to a safer environment. We are currently working with the victim to find permanent suitable accommodation that is in a different geographical location to the victim's original home.

We also dealt with 12 reports of hate crime, of which 60% of incidents happened in the North of the Borough. An example involves a victim facing a torrent of racist abuse and intimidation from a neighbour. Although the abuse stopped after our initial intervention, the pattern intimidation and abuse returned and was affecting the victim's young children. We are currently working with a range of agencies to support the victim and deal with the perpetrator.

- e. **Create safer communities:** Our Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) Team is trained to support residents who face anti-social behaviour ranging from noisy neighbours to serious issues such

as racial harassment, hate crime, drug misuse and dealing and other criminal activity.

- e. **Assess equality impact:** Fair Treatment Assessments are part of major changes in services. For example, we have worked with SMBC to assess how the proposed regeneration of the Kingshurst Regeneration Project will meet the needs of the diverse local population. The outcomes from the assessment are reflected in the planning process.
- f. **Apprenticeships:** In the face of challenging circumstances, we progressed our Apprentice Scheme for which over 70 people expressed an interest. The recruitment resulted in filling all 6 positions with the successful candidates representing a diverse range of age, gender and disability.

6 Further work

SCH Delivery Plan 2019/20

In our last report we had identified key priorities which have a significant and direct impact on equalities. Work continuing includes:

- a. **Step-change in customer satisfaction and engagement:** The Resident Engagement Strategy has been approved by the Board. Operational delivery arrangements are underway, but some detailed tasks have been delayed in the light of the pandemic. Examples of consultation activities undertaken include a Well-being survey and the standards of service residents can expect to receive from SCH. Residents were also encouraged to take part on relevant government consultation initiatives, such as Fire Safety and 'See The Person' campaign.

We will be working closely with our 'VIP' Panel of over 340 residents. The VIP Body is diverse:

- The ratio of women is 67% to 33% men.
 - 15% of the Panel are Black and Asian Minority Ethnic and 82% are White.
 - 15% are aged under 45, 36% are aged between 46 and 64 years and the balance are over 65.
 - 29% have a disability.
- b. **Utilise opportunities for stock growth and invest intelligently in current housing stock:** The Board has approved the overall Asset Management Strategy which considers the impact on disabled customers and provides links to key strategies such as fuel poverty. Background planning work is underway, and the operational delivery is yet to start.
- c. **Embed the 'Safer Homes' as a core theme:** We continue to ensure that homes and communal areas remain safe. Work with external partners such as contractors and the Fire Service ensures that the needs of disabled and vulnerable residents are met. This work stream continues to be a priority.
- d. **Implement Locality Working:** SCH continues to remain a key partner in Locality Working that is designed to bring together resources from all statutory and voluntary agencies to develop and maintain successful neighbourhoods. This work stream continues with SCH playing a lead role.
- e. **Build on Staff Development:** SCH's Senior Leadership Team and Frontline Managers Team continue to receive Management

Development Training. A range of training is being provided through SMB's Learning Pool.

- f. **Increase Digital Engagement:** The SCH portal for customers continues to receive publicity to encourage residents to take up more services digitally.

SCH Delivery Plan 2021/2022

In addition to taking forward work highlight in section 7 above, we will focus on the following high-level priorities:

- a. **Inclusive Services Register:** Create a framework that identifies residents who are most vulnerable so that we can tailor or deliver services in ways that are most appropriate to meet their needs.
- b. **Housing Allocations Policy:** Work with SMBC to review the Housing Allocations Policy and ensure that the criteria are designed to meet the needs of people in the highest housing need and non-discriminatory.
- c. **Passion in People:** Implement the newly adopted strategy that aims to ensure that our staff continue to feel valued and supported and contribute to delivering excellence.
- d. **Disability Confident Scheme:** Achieve Level 2 of the government's accreditation scheme to demonstrate our commitment to employing and supporting disabled job applicants and employees.
- e. **Gender Pay Gap:** Interrogate the results of the Gender Pay Report and identify actions to reduce the pay gap between men and women.
- f. **Diversity targets:** Develop target to attract diverse job applicants to improve the diversity profile of employees.

- g. **Property adaptations:** Review our approach to supporting people with disabilities to live independently.

Conclusion

The examples of work done, already underway and planned for 2021/2022 are only a selection of ways in which we work to meet our Equality Duty and promote fairness and inclusion. The principles of equality and diversity have and remain a cornerstone of the way we work. We know that understanding more about our residents, customers, employees and board members will enable us to make an impact not just within SCH but the wider community that we serve.

We believe that equality and inclusion are not a parallel process or something to think about every so often – it is fundamental to our day to day operations. We also recognise that Solihull is becoming more culturally and socially diverse, bringing the benefits of different experiences and perspectives. We welcome the opportunity to work harder to recognise different needs, situations and goals and to remove barriers that limit access and achievement.

More information

If you would like this information in alternative ways or want more information please contact us on 0121 7171 1515 or email us at info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

SCH Development

Mark Pinnell
Executive Director of Asset
Management & Development

&

Andy Duke
Development Manager



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

Current Sites



Willow Way

3 houses and 4 apartments for social rent



Faulkner Road

7 net zero carbon bungalows for rent

Low Carbon Features

- A 'super insulated' build system
- Air source heat pumps
- Solar Panels
- Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery™ systems
- Domestic battery storage
- Energy monitoring system



Brackleys Way

7 houses for shared ownership



Wagon Lane

15 houses for shared ownership



Halifax Road

7 houses for shared ownership

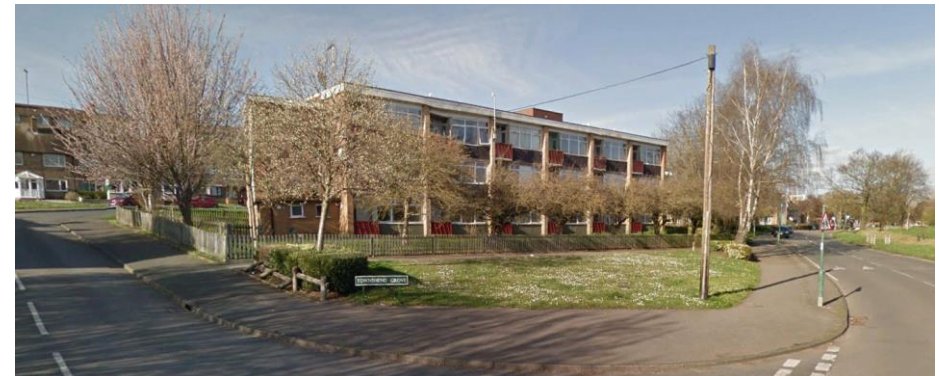


Pipeline Sites



Lakeside – Existing

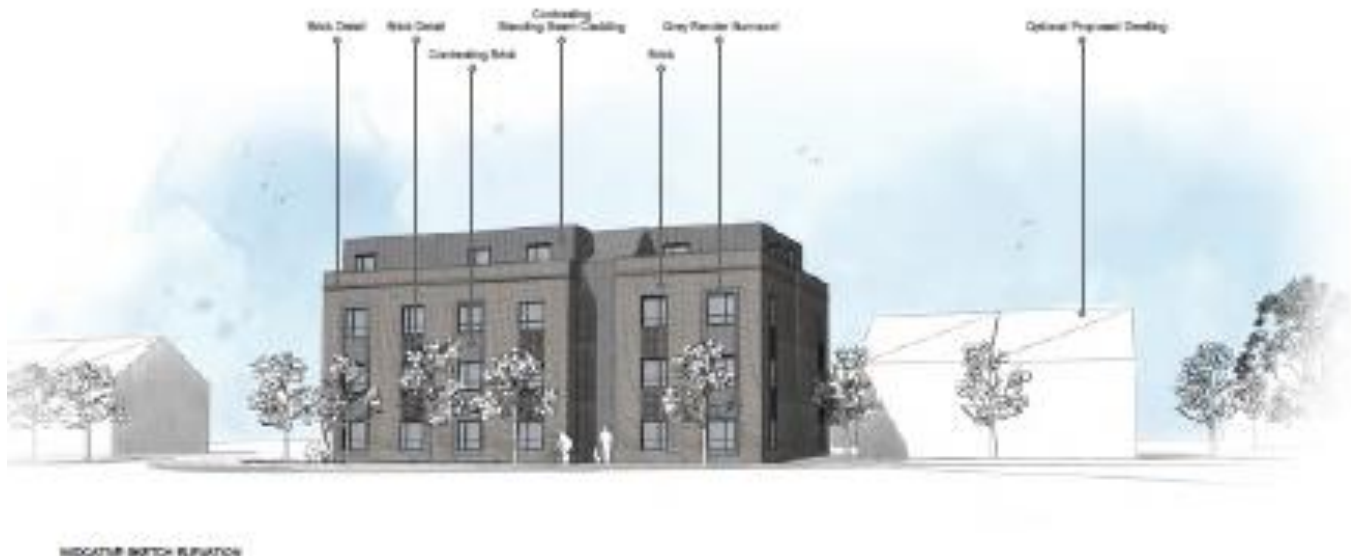
Existing 17 Bedsits



Lakeside – Proposed

28 Net zero properties

4 houses for social rent and 24 Supported move on apartments for young people including office support



Kingshurst Village Centre

Circa 86 net zero residential properties, health, community and retail units



Kingshurst Village Centre

- SCH as acting as the development manager for the build contract on behalf of SMBC / UKC
- Social Rent
 - 12 x 1 Bed Apartments
 - 11 x 2 Bed Houses
 - 39 x 3 Bed Houses
 - 7 x 4 Bed Houses
- Shared Ownership
 - 7 x 2 Bed Houses
 - 10 x 3 Bed Houses



Kingshurst Village Centre

- **Retail Units** – 730m² of retail space, including an anchor store and 5 smaller retail units, parking and service yard.
- **Health** – 1,710m² to include GP Surgery, Dentist and Pharmacy.
- **Community** – A multi-disciplinary approach connecting healthcare and wider community services with a focus on health prevention and social connectivity



Anglesey Avenue

5 Net zero houses for social rent



SCH Asset Management Strategy

- Future Development pipeline sties and strategy has fed into the wider 2022 – 2027 asset management strategy.
- Information gathered via stock condition surveys will be utilised by the development team to assess poor performing assets for the potential of development or to inform options appraisals.



SCH Board Governance

- With our expanding role in the development of new housing and the work which will be needed to critically review redevelopment opportunities which may arise as part of the option appraisal process, it is proposed to establish a development sub committee / expert panel.
- It is proposed that the membership will include co-opted independent development expertise as well as SMBC representation and that the group will act as a critical friend both in terms of our existing developments as well as potential new developments.





Thank You

Any Questions?



This page is intentionally left blank

**SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING
BOARD MEETING: MONDAY 29 MARCH 2021
REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

**REVENUE & CAPITAL FINANCIAL MONITORING AND
FORECAST 2020/21 – DECEMBER 2020 (QUARTER 3)**

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the SCH Board on the financial performance for the 9 months to 31 December 2020 (quarter 3).

2. Recommendation – Items for Noting

- 2.1 The Board is requested to:

- (i) **NOTE** the latest forecast to year end for the current financial year 2020/21.
- (ii) **APPROVE** an increase to the Biomass tariff for 2021/22 of 1.83 pence (including VAT) per Kwh from 9.98 pence to 11.81 pence per Kwh and that the remainder of the increase detailed in paragraph 4.16 be spread across 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- (iii) **NOTE** the progress on delivery of 2020/21 planned savings.
- (iv) **NOTE** the current and forecast reserves position.
- (v) **NOTE** the financial implications identified to impact the 2021/22 financial year.

3. Financial Performance 2020/21 - General

- 3.1 Appendix 1 (the Financial Dashboard) to this report summarises the Revenue and Capital financial performance for the 9 month period to 31 December 2020. Board members are reminded that the Financial Dashboard was also circulated via e-mail on Tuesday 19 January 2021. Since the Dashboard was circulated the following changes have been made:

- The forecast overspend for the Chief Executive Directorate has reduced due to funding provided to SCH by SMBC's COVID Outbreak Management Fund.
- A recently agreed settlement figure has also now been included within the Chief Executive forecast.
- The forecast underspend on Housing Management has increased due to an amendment to the forecast spend on Budget Hotels.
- The Capital forecast has been amended from a forecast underspend of £431k to a forecast underspend of £1,014k with the most notable change being on New Builds with slippage now recognised on Wagon Lane.

3.2 The Financial Dashboard also includes an update on savings for the 3-year period 2020/21 to 2022/23 and an update on the expected SCH and HRA Reserves outturn position.

3.3 The revenue position shows a forecast outturn position of breakeven.

	Annual Budget £'000s	Forecast Variance £'000s
Chief Executive	2,330	(17)
Housing & Communities	5,309	(66)
Asset Management	8,782	(51)
Procurement	88	(14)
Customer Service Transformation & Business Support	2,768	(12)
Total Revenue Spend	19,277	(160)
Total Revenue Management Fee (inclusive of £132k from Welfare Reform Reserve)	(18,724)	0
Transfer net revenue surplus to reserves	181	0
Approved use of Budget Strategy Reserve	(734)	0
Net Position	0	(160)

3.4 The capital budgets have been updated to reflect the mid-year review which was approved by SMBC's Full Cabinet at their meeting on 3 December 2020. After these budget revisions the capital position shows a forecast outturn position of £1,014k underspent (5.13%).

	Annual Budget £'000s	Forecast Variance £'000s
Adaptations	765	(45)
Health, Safety and Legal Obligations	2,824	403
Climate and Energy	1,607	(46)
Capital Maintenance and Improvements	2,670	(344)
Environment and Estates	240	(40)
Cyclical Capital Maintenance and Envelope Improvement Works	3,257	100
Programme Management and ICT	1,638	(200)
Solihull Independent Living	0	0
Stock Growth and Development	6,754	(842)
Total Capital Spend	19,755	(1,014)

- 3.5 A summary of the main variances are set out in sections 4 and 5 below.

4. Part 1 - Revenue Financial Performance 2020/21

Chief Executive

- 4.1 Central Administration – forecast to outturn £17k (0.7%) underspent. The forecast outturn includes underspends of £31k on uncommitted funding due to savings made on the reduction of the employer pension contribution, £20k on Investigation costs due to a reduced number of audit investigations this year, £17k on Employee Insurance, £10k Staff conferences and forecast overspends of £52k on Other Employee Costs due to Early Leaver payments. £13k Bad Debt write offs based on 2019/20 outturn and also £4k minor underspends.
- 4.2 SMBC Support Services – forecast to outturn £9k (0.7%) overspent based on the updated 2020/21 Service Level Agreement value.
- 4.3 COVID-19 – forecast to outturn breakeven. The COVID-19 cost centre was set up in March 2020 to capture additional costs incurred by SCH as a result of COVID-19. SMBC's Director of Public Health has agreed to fund SCH's £135k forecast spend on managing the COVID-19 outbreak from the COVID Outbreak Management Fund. The forecast costs primarily relate to additional consumable costs of £78k including PPE, hand sanitising stations, and ad hoc items for rough sleepers. Other spend relates to homelessness accommodation such as an additional 8 HRA properties used as TA to help move families out of budget hotel accommodation including furniture £20k, council tax £12k and other minor spends of £25k.

Housing & Communities

- 4.4 Housing Management – forecast to outturn £27k (10.1%) underspent due to a delay in recruiting to the new Mental Health Worker post.
- 4.5 Housing Options – forecast to outturn at £54k (10.2%) underspent. The forecast includes a net overspend of £40k on Budget Hotels after allowing for an assumed receipt of 74% Housing benefit for the remainder of the financial year, this is part offset by a forecast underspend of £101k on Homelessness due to £75k income for Preventing Homelessness not budgeted for and also vacancies within the team. Ipswich House is forecast to overspend by £16k due to high gas costs and an unexpected prior year invoice for the support contract. Temporary Accommodation is also forecast to overspend by £45k due to utilities forecast overspend of £35k which is currently being investigated by the budget holder and additional furniture £10k. Other minor underspends totalling £11k on Saxon Court across various expenditure codes.
- 4.6 The Wellbeing service is forecast to underspend by £43k mainly due to a conscious decision to keep spending to a minimum pending a procurement exercise to move to a new digital platform. This is now due

to take place in 2021/22 and the consequences of these additional costs will be reviewed early next year.

- 4.7 Rent Collection & Money Advice – forecast to outturn £33k (3.5%) underspent. This is primarily due to forecast underspend within the Income Collection Team of £36k on Court fees and Warrant fees due to the current freeze on evictions as a result of COVID-19. Partly offset by minor overspends of £3k.
- 4.8 During 2018/19 the level of rental income lost to the HRA due to void garages was higher than the budget allowance. It was therefore agreed at the Board meeting on 20 May 2019 that regular updates of void garages would be included within the quarterly financial reports. The table below compares the current void rate to the 2019/20 outturn position and the current budget position.

2019/20 Year-end	2020/21 Budget	2021/22 Budget	2020/21 Period 9 Actual
29.9%	33.0%	30.5%	31.7%

- 4.9 Neighbourhood Services – forecast to outturn £30k (0.8%) overspent. SCH undertook a survey of tree works required alongside SMBC and identified where there are tree works of a high priority. The work highlighted additional costs of approximately £50k in 2020/21 which are included within the current forecast overspend of £49k on Grounds Maintenance. The Executive Director for Housing and Communities has continued to work with the other members of the Executive Management Team to contain this additional spend within the forecast underspend for 2020/21, however, if by the financial year-end sufficient underspends have not been identified we will need to use reserves to fund this high priority one-off expenditure. This overspend is part offset by a forecast underspend of £20k on High and Low Rise cleaning and a minor overspend of £1k. The budget allows for a number of additional window cleans and / or deep-cleans. However, the standard of cleaning provided by the contractor this year has meant fewer deep cleans have been required.
- 4.10 SCH Developments – forecast to outturn £18k (20.7%) overspent due to the repayment of a Home's England Grant received for a shared ownership property at 135-137 Warwick Road. The £24k grant became repayable when the occupier purchased the remaining SCH share of the property. This overspend is partly offset by an underspend due to additional rental income at both Mason's Close and 134-137 Warwick Road.

Asset Management

- 4.11 Day-to-Day – forecast to outturn £24k (0.8%) underspent. Forecast underspends on Property Repairs Day-to-Day due to non-essential repairs being stopped because of the impact of COVID-19, the most significant underspends can be seen on Asbestos £25k, Drainage £20k, Materials £12k, Internal Works £10k and Glazing £10k. Largely offset by a forecast overspend of £75k due to the settlement of 13 disrepair claims, a further 4 claims expected in the current financial year. There is also a forecast underspend of £15k on Standby where the number of call outs have decreased by 14% since 2019/20. Other minor underspends of £7k across Day-to-Day.
- 4.12 Void repairs – forecast to outturn £98k (4.9%) underspent due to an underspend on materials as more Kitchen and Bathrooms job are being replaced on the capital programme this year.
- 4.13 Compliance - forecast to outturn £50k (2.1%) underspent. An underspend of £69k on Asbestos relates to vacant posts within the team which have proved difficult to recruit to. This underspend is partly offset by a forecast overspend of £26k on Safer Homes, partly caused by £18k of unpaid jobs relating to 2019/20 and also a forecast of £8k for Dodds overheads under recovered. Other minor underspends of £7k.
- 4.14 Support Services - forecast to outturn £46k (3.2%) overspent. The forecast now includes expected spend of £70k for Stock Condition Surveys. On 20 March 2020 SCH Board noted expected spend of £100k on Stock Condition Surveys, it was proposed that any forecast underspend be used to fund this cost pressure and in the event there was insufficient underspend available Board agree to utilise the Budget Strategy Reserve. As the overall forecast revenue position for SCH is currently underspent it is assumed use of the Budget Strategy Reserve will not be required.
- 4.15 The previously identified budget pressure of £5k on Biomass has now reduced to a forecast overspend net of income of £1k. Additional Renewable Heat Incentive income of £102k is now expected in addition to forecast underspends of £53k for Plant Room works with works now being capitalised and other minor underspends of £4k. These underspends are expected to offset forecast overspends totalling £109k including Gas £32k, Electricity £54k and Pellets £23k with the forecast now based on actual pellet costs for the past 12 months plus a 5% allowance for increased usage. A shortfall on Energy Billing income of £51k is forecast based on year to date income received plus 2019/20 actual income received.
- 4.16 Tenants are currently charged 9.98p per KWH (including VAT) for Biomass and this charge has not changed since the heating systems were first installed and commissioned in 2015. Continuing to charge 9.98p per Kwh (including VAT) would result in an under recovery of costs of approximately £97k in 2021/22. To recover the current fuel costs

incurred for the Biomass system and allowing for assumed inflation at 2.5% per year on gas, electricity and pellets the tariff would need to increase to 15.49p (including VAT) per Kwh, an increase of 55.21%. It is proposed this increase is spread over 3 years to reduce the impact to tenants, see below table. SCH Board are therefore requested to approve a tariff of 11.81p per Kwh for 2021/22 and that the remainder of the increase be spread across 2022/23 and 2023/24.

- 4.17 This could become a significant cost to our tenants and in the event this causes financial difficulties, there are options available for financial support that can be considered. It should also be noted that the actual charge to be applied in 2022/23 and 2023/24 will be recalculated as part of each year's budget setting process and take into account actual costs and inflation at that time so may change, in cash terms, from the indicative figures quoted below.

	2020/21 Tariff	2021/22 Tariff	2022/23 Tariff	2023/24 Tariff
	Pence per kwh	Pence per kwh	Pence per kwh	Pence per kwh
Including VAT	9.98	11.81	13.65	15.49
% Increase from previous year		20.54%	15.56%	13.46%

- 4.18 The forecast overspend on Stock Condition Surveys and Biomass have been partly offset by a forecast underspend on Fleet Management of £18k due to improved fuel efficiency and other minor underspends totalling £7k.

- 4.19 Management team – forecast to outturn £21k (19.2%) overspent due to vacant posts recruited at higher spinal points than budgeted.

Procurement

- 4.20 Procurement - forecast to outturn £14k (16.0%) underspent due to the London Housing Consortium rebate received annually based on a percentage of income generated by this framework agreement and a minor forecast underspend on pay of £4k due to vacancies

Customer Service Transformation & Business Support

- 4.21 Governance & Board Administration – forecast to outturn £14k (9.4%) underspent where £4k is due to a vacant post and £10k due to postponed and reduced Officer expenses.
- 4.22 Customer Experience – forecast to outturn £4k (0.3%) underspent due to minor underspends.
- 4.23 Business Support – forecast to outturn £6k (0.2%) underspent. Forecast underspend of £32k on Endeavour House, various underspends across

the cost centre with the most notable being electricity £7k, postage £6k, non-domestic rates £5k, stationery £4k and catering provisions £4k. The remaining underspend of £6k comprises of several minor underspends. Further underspends are expected on Training, £14k based on current scheduled training courses for the year, Kingshurst office £14k due to additional income received for rental of office space, Coppice Way £3k various minor underspends and Executive Support Team £8k due to a vacancy. Partly offset by a £21k shortfall on room rental income across Auckland Hall, Crabtree Hall and Whar Hall Farm Community Hall caused by COVID.

- 4.24 Within Policy and Performance an overspend of £56k is expected due to £85k costs associated with the recently tendered Workflow solutions contract. This contract requires a specialist organisation to complete an impartial feasibility business case which will support the Executive Leadership Team to make wider strategic decisions around the implementation of and investment in an end to end customer journey/workflow system. The £85k cost of this contract is partly offset within Policy and Performance by underspends on Grants and Subscriptions £16k, Professional Fees £15k with a minor pay overspend of £2k.

5. Part 2 – Capital Financial Performance 2020/21

- 5.1 Stock Growth & Development is forecast to underspend by £842k (12.47%) due to slippage in schemes delivered including the new build scheme at Halifax Road (£430k) due to a delay in purchasing a required garage, and the new build development at Wagon Lane (£342k). Property acquisitions are forecast to underspend by £70k with 4 acquisitions currently at offer stage with 3 expected to complete this financial year.
- 5.2 The Council have been in negotiations with Bromford Homes since 2019 regarding the acquisition of 13 properties which are predominantly used at present to house adults with specific support requirements. The intention is that these properties will be owned by the Council's Housing Revenue Account and if no other high priority need is identified by the Council these properties could be used as general purpose housing stock. The acquisition will be a stock transfer and was planned to be complete earlier this year but the current pandemic will delay this to the end of the financial year. Forecast spend on legal fees of £20k during the current financial year will be funded through the reallocation of funding from the Property acquisitions budget, as approved at the mid-year review.
- 5.3 Stock Improvement – forecast to underspend by £172k (1.32%). Many projects are running behind their original profile as works were put on hold due to COVID-19. The required rephasings were therefore agreed as part of the capital mid-year review and forecast variances below are after agreed rephasings have been taken into account.

The most notable underspends are as follows:

- Low Rise Overcladding £200k forecast underspend due to delays experienced in planning and obtaining Leaseholder agreements.
- IT Strategy £200k forecast underspend. Carry forward of £100k from 2019/20 no longer required, further works are expected to be identified next financial year when the results of the Workflow solutions project are known.
- Sheltered Schemes forecast to underspend by £99k. Works have been postponed until 2021/22 due to COVID-19 as the residents are deemed vulnerable, carry forward of the budget will be requested.
- Lift Refurbishment is forecast to underspend by £190k. The three lift replacements due to take place in the current financial year have now been delayed until 2021/22 due to supplier uncertainties and delays with planning, therefore the only spend on this programme will be for surveys and design work carried out to date.
- Other smaller forecast underspends totalling £185k on Public Sector Adaptations £50k, Gas and Warm Air £46k, Environmental and Estates Works £40k, Electrical Improvement Works £36k and Roofing Works £13k.

5.4 The above underspends are partly offset by forecast overspends on the below schemes:

- High Rise Sprinklers forecast overspend of £439k. In March 2020 Cabinet agreed an update to the capital programme to undertake the retrofitting of sprinklers to 37 high-rise buildings. The total cost of investment required is £9.5m over 4 years to be funded through the use of HRA reserves and working balances. Works have now commenced and forecast spend of £1.247m on the project is now expected in 2020/21 against a budget of £808k. The project scope for the pre-mobilisation phase of the project has widened to include the 37 Pilots Installations Works and the design costs for the main programme. As a consequence the projected spend for this phase of the project has increased from the initial budget that was set.
- Cyclical Maintenance forecast overspend of £100k. The programme had been running behind from 2019/20, however Asset Management are now confident to catch up in 2020/21 to the original budgeted allocation.
- Kitchens and Bathrooms £91k forecast overspend. As mentioned in paragraph 4.10 a larger number of Kitchens and Bathroom works in void properties have been capitalised this financial year.
- Garage Strategy Implementation forecast to overspend by £64k due to works budgeted for in 2019/20 but with a completion date of 1 April 2020.
- Other smaller forecast overspends totalling £8k on Public Sector Minor works £5k and CCTV £3k.

5.5 Following the identification of non-compliant spandrel panels in 16 high-rise blocks in the North of the Borough further architectural work is required to design the replacement panels and inform the borrowing requirement for the Council. This is forecast to cost £350k across

2020/21 and 2021/22. The required borrowing for this project was approved by SMBC's Full Cabinet on 3 December 2020.

- 5.6 Solihull Independent Living (SIL) (private sector properties) forecast to outturn to budget. In 2019/20, SIL spend totalled £1.018m and there is a budget for 2020/21 of £1.516m. The expenditure is forecast to outturn £711k underspent and will be offset by a reduction in the income received from the Council to bring the forecast outturn to breakeven. The underspend is partly due to a suspension of works during the year due to COVID-19, however these budgets were also significantly underspent in 2019/20. A joint project is therefore taking place between Adult Care & Support and SCH to increase referrals and workload. The HRA Capital report presented to the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Health on 15 February 2021 included a proposal to carry forward £625k into 2021/22, the requested carry forward will be required to clear the current back log of approximately 450 private referrals.

6. Workforce Management Target

- 6.1 During 2020/21 the Board approved the introduction of a 3% workforce management target (WMT). This saving is designed to be achieved by natural staff turnover rather than implementing additional savings. The table below shows SCH are currently achieving the workforce management target across all service areas as at period 9.

Service Area	Pay Budgets			Actual Spend £'000s	Current Variance £'000s	Forecast Variance £'000s
	Gross £'000s	WMT £'000s	Net £'000s			
Chief Executive	388	0	388	387	(1)	(1)
Housing & Communities	3,019	89	2,930	2,661	(269)	(78)
Asset Management	3,553	110	3,443	3,199	(244)	(2)
Procurement	119	3	116	83	(33)	(4)
Customer Service Transformation and Business Support	1,271	31	1,240	1,119	(121)	(6)
Total	8,350	233	8,117	7,449	(668)	(91)

7. Part 3 – Savings Delivery

- 7.1 The approved revenue budgets for 2020/21 included a total net saving of £313k: made up of £270k savings targets and £43k net income targets.
- 7.2 As reported in Quarter 2 all of the savings required in 2020/21 and 2021/22 are rated as green, whereby changes have been implemented

and the value of the savings have been confirmed. Due to the available management fee there were no further savings required in 2022/23.

	2020/21 £'000	2021/22 £'000	2022/23 £'000
Red	0	0	0
Amber	0	0	0
Green	313	2,938	0
TOTAL	313	2,938	0

8. Part 4 – SCH and HRA Reserves Position

- 8.1 The SCH Reserves as at 1 April 2020 were a negative balance of £1,588k, which included a negative Pensions Reserve balance of £11,986k. This is not included on the Reserves schedule within the Financial Dashboard as it is not considered repayable in the foreseeable future and the Council provides its continuing support to fund the pension's deficit on an annual basis. There are other positive reserves of £10,398k, including a Budget Strategy Reserve of £3,613k generated by the 2016/17 and 2017/18 SCH surpluses, of which £1,178k is earmarked for restructure costs. The expected decrease in SCH Reserves of £547k represents the current revenue underspend forecast of £181k, less use of reserves previously approved by the Board of £728k giving an expected year-end balance of £9,851k.
- 8.2 The HRA Reserves as at 1 April 2020 were £34,378k made up of £15,866k revenue reserves and £18,512k capital reserves.
- 8.3 The HRA Revenue Reserves are forecast to decrease by a net £7356k in 2020/21 after planned contributions to the future capital investment reserve of £885k and a budgeted net HRA surplus in 2020/21 of £455k less approved use of the welfare reform reserve £702k, earmarked capital investment of £733k and contribution to the Oracle Cloud project of £640k.
- 8.4 The HRA Revenue Reserves also include £6.913k earmarked for spend on the High Rise Sprinkler project, no spend is expected in 2020/21.
- 8.5 The HRA Capital Reserves are forecast to decrease by a net £2,637k in 2020/21, due primarily to the funding of the current new build projects.
- 8.6 The High Rise Sprinkler Project Reserve within HRA Capital Reserves is currently budgeted at £2,587k funded from the Major Repairs Reserve. Expected use of this reserve in 2020/21 is £808k, in line with approved

use, however, if the current forecast spend of £1,247k in 2020/21 is correct this would result in additional use of reserves of £439k.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 The report covers financial progress against budget for the year to date and any implications are addressed in the main body of the report. However there are a number of projects that have recently commenced that are likely to impact on the 2021/22 budget. These include:-

- The outcome of the Workflow project is likely to lead to the need for a significant investment in future transformational work the scale of which is currently unknown.
- The investment in specialist software to support improvements in rent collection and targeted financial support to vulnerable tenants.
- The implementation of a Smarter Ways of Working project will impact on investment in IT, potential modifications to accommodation and Organisational Development for staff.

9.2 It is proposed that next year's monitoring report includes a section identifying the additional costs arising from these projects along with the proposals of funding and the implications on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 None specifically arising.

11. Risk Management Implications

11.1 Financial risks are addressed in the main body of the report. The impact of COVID-19 has introduced a new risk on the potential increase of bad debts. Currently there are sufficient budget strategy reserves for the HRA and SCH to fund the gaps forecast.

12. Value for Money and Efficiency Considerations/Implications

12.1 None specifically – this report is a monitoring report detailing the usage of available funds across the organisation.

13. Tenant Involvement/Consultation

13.1 None required.

14. Consistent with Strategic Vision

14.1 The Strategic Vision is built on a foundation of strong financial management and the reporting of financial outturn is a key element of this.

REPORT AUTHORS:

Samantha Gilbert Tel: 0121 704 6278
SCH Chief Financial Officer
sgilbert@solihull.gov.uk

Karen Cranley Tel: 0121 704 6421
SCH Finance Manager
Karen.Cranley@solihull.gov.uk

Non-pay Variance at Period 9	Forecast Non-pay Variance	Overall Comment on Non-pay forecast outturn
92	(16)	SMBC's Director of Public Health has agreed to fund SCH's £135k forecast spend associated with COVID-19. The forecast spend includes 8 new TA properties which have resulted in additional costs of £50k for Council Tax, furniture, utilities and cleaning costs. The remaining spend relates to purchase of PPE, Saxon Court visitor pod, sanitisers installed in residential blocks, ad hoc items for rough sleepers and driver mileage. Other variances include other employee costs £52k overspend due to redundancy and settlement costs, uncommitted budget £31k underspend, Employee Insurance underspend of £17k, Head Office charges for Internal Audit Investigations underspend of £20k due to a reduced number of investigations compared to previous years, £13k forecast bad debt , Staff Conferences underspend of £10k, SMBC support services SLA overspend of £9k and £12k minor underspend.
(208)	3	Forecast net £40k overspend on Homelessness budget hotels after allowing for an assumed receipt of 74% Housing Benefit (based on year to date average collection rate) . £50k additional tree maintenance works to be funded from current underspends. £24k accrual for repayment of grant to Homes England for a property that was previously Shared Ownership. Net underspend on Income Collection Court and Warrant Fees of £36k due to a freeze on evictions due to COVID-19. Also underspend forecast on High and Low Rise Cleaning £20k, in addition to the contract cost the budget allows for a number of additional window cleans and deep cleans that have not been necessary this year. £16k saving in transport costs due to more home working and fewer visits to tenants, £16k saving on Income Collection Team paid via SMBC due to staff members at bottom of scale budgeted top of scale, £23k minor underspends.
(179)	(49)	Forecast underspend across Asset Management largely due to COVID-19. Underspends include Day to Day £73k and Voids £98k mainly due to underspends on materials recharged to Capital. Additional forecast underspends on Stores £35k due to the year end stock adjustment not previously budgeted for, Fuel £40k mainly due to more efficient fuel usage, and other minor underspends £20k. Forecast underspends are partly offset by forecast overspends on waste costs £72k as the disposal costs have increased alongside an increase in fly tipping throughout lockdown and complaints compensation £75k due to a backlog in cases. The forecast also includes spend of £70k for Stock Condition Surveys to be funded from current Asset Management underspends.
(8)	(10)	Forecast underspend of £10k due to Procurement rebate.
(101)	(6)	Forecast underspends include Endeavour House £32k across premises costs, postage and stationery, additional rental income at Kingshurst Area Office £14k and £3k minor underspends. £21k in lost income from Community Halls due to COVID-19 offset with a saving on cleaning of £9k. There are also forecast underspends on the Training budget of £23k, Grants and Subscriptions £16k and Professional Fees £15k. These underspends are partially offset by forecast spend of £85k for Workflow Review.
(404)	(78)	

Page 105

¹ Based on average purchase price of £130,000

¹ Approved use of BSR in 2020/21 includes: £335k pay increase, £153k STW commission, £100k Apprenticeship scheme, £50k Saxon Court Manager, £49k support for Wellbeing, and £41k HR Officer.

¹ HRA Revenue balances are expected to decrease due to funding approved from the Welfare Reform Reserve.

² High Rise Sprinklers Reserve now split across revenue and capital reserves. Spend of £808k is expected from the capital reserve in line with approved use, however, if the current forecast is correct there will be additional use of £560k in 2020/21.

This page is intentionally left blank

SOLIHULL COMMUNITY HOUSING

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

CHAIR'S REPORT FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 8 MARCH 2021

Recommendation for Full Board:

The Board is asked to:–

- (i) **Note** the framework for review of Risk Registers
- (ii) **Note** the actions taken by the Committee

Board Members present at the meeting: Nigel Page (Chair), Ben Burton; Jenny Fletcher, Patricia Smith

In Attendance: Richard Hyde

Officers present: Fiona Hughes, Samantha Gilbert, Mark Pinnell, Mary Moroney, Olly Dodds, Jahnavi Jagadish, Sarah Powell (first two reports only) and Barbara Griffiths

Apology: Diane Howell

Summary of Committee Meeting:

1. External Audit Plan 2020/21:

Committee reviewed and approved the annual audit plan which will follow a similar format to previous years. We noted the additional checks that will be undertaken in light of the pandemic around the assessment of “going concern”.

2. Procurement Improvement Update:

We reviewed a new document which is reviewed by the ELT, which includes RAG ratings and is sorted into date order which makes it easy to determine what contracts are coming up for procurement. We noted that a new procurement officer has commenced employment with effect from 8 March which has addressed two of the recommendations for improvement. Exception to the Rules continue to reduce in number with only three in the last two months.

We noted that the financial checks carried out on contractors is progressing, and that there are now only two contracts within top 50 rated as red. We have mitigated the risk around the temporary recruitment process by having a main provider with a list of approved contractors underneath that.

3. Risk Management and Annual Governance Statement:

Committee reviewed the SCH Corporate; and Strategic Housing Framework (shared risks between SMBC and SCH but Council are risk owners) risk registers. Board are asked to note that work has been ongoing for the last year with SMBC on joint risks and the intention is that SMBC will have strategic oversight of all the risks and operational risks relating specifically to SCH and SMBC will support the Strategic Housing Framework risk register.

We agreed a framework for future review and oversight of risk registers as follows:

Risk Register Title	Frequency of Reporting to Committee	Reporting to Full Board
SCH Corporate	Quarterly	Annual Report – 7 June 2021
Covid	Quarterly	Annual Report – 7 June 2021
Strategic Housing (SMBC /SCH)	Annually (unless new risk added which will be reported by exception in cover report to Committee and included in Chair's Report to full Board)	Annual Report – 7 June 2021

We noted the timetable for producing the Annual Governance Statement which will be reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee on 21 June 2021 prior to full Board being asked to approve later the same day.

4. Internal Audit Report:

We reviewed the schedule of planned audits for 2020/21 and noted that the complaints review had been postponed following discussions with ELT to allow time for the current internal review to be completed and actions implemented but will take place in 2021/22.

We considered the recent Level 3 Assurance given to Contract Management and noted the links between this audit and the Procurement audit and asked for assurance that recommendations will be fully implemented.

We were assured that improving contract management is a high priority for the ELT alongside the improvements to procurement. There are pockets of excellent contract management across SCH but recognise it is an area for improvement. ELT are considering a package of measures to incorporate the recommendations of the audit and will include policies, procedures, training, and clarity of roles and responsibilities. We agreed that a report will be brought to our next meeting on progress with delivering the audit recommendations.

We reviewed the audit plan for 2021/22 and requested that the review of income collection should include leaseholder debt recovery and specifically the recovery of costs of the Envelope Scheme and other capital works.

We were pleased to note that the Fire Safety audit had achieved level 2 and not level 1 was due to outstanding training.

The other item of note is the reduction in properties recovered due to tenancy fraud, this is in the main due to the restrictions around Covid and ban on evictions.

Nigel Page
Chair of Audit & Risk Committee
12 March 2021

This page is intentionally left blank

Date produced – 2 February 2021

Full Board Forward Plan

Monday 29 March 2021			
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee Meeting held on 22 February	Chris Williams
		Chair's Report from Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 8 March 2021	Nigel Page
		Chair's Report from Human Resources & Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 15 March 2021	Jenny Fletcher
		Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy	Niku Mawby
Monday 7 June 2021			
		Annual Report on Risk Management	Fiona Hughes
		Annual Governance Review including Standing Orders – to include Committee Membership	Mary Moroney
		Information Technology Annual Report	Paul Langham
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee Meeting held on 24 May 2021	Chris Williams
		Quarter 4 2020/21 Performance Exception Report	Kevin Bennett
		Quarter 4 2020/21 Health & Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Quarter 4 2020/21 Financial Monitoring	Sam Gilbert
		Energy & Environmental Strategy	Mark Pinnell
Monday 21 June 2021 (meeting immediately after Audit & Risk Committee – single item agenda)			
		Chair's Report (including Annual Accounts) from Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2021	Nigel Page
Monday 27 September 2021 – Includes AGM			
		Chair's Report from Human Resources & Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 12 July 2021	Jenny Fletcher
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee Meeting held on 13 September 2021	Chris Williams
		Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance Exception Report	Kevin Bennett
		Quarter 1 2021/22 Health & Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Quarter 1 2021/22 Financial Monitoring	Sam Gilbert
Monday 29 November 2021			
		Chair's Report from Housing Operations Committee Meeting held on 15 November 2021	Chris Williams
		Chair's Report from Human Resources & Remuneration Committee Meeting held on 18 October 2021	Jenny Fletcher

		Chair's Report from Audit & Risk Committee Meeting held on 11 October 2021	Nigel Page
		Quarter 2 2021/22 Performance Exception Report	Kevin Bennett
		Quarter 2 2021/22 Health & Safety Report	Mark Wills
		Quarter 2 2021/22 Financial Monitoring	Sam Gilbert

Regular Items (every meeting):

- Minutes of Previous Meeting
- Chairs' reports from Committee Meetings

Quarterly Reports:

- Performance (Exception Reporting)
- Health & Safety Report (including data on accidents)